



The Cocoon





"I am a cocoon; or must I say in a cocoon?"

The Cocoon

A Best Cure
Comedy

By
Ruth McKenney Seare
Author of "The Story of the Little Girl"



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A Rest-Cure
Comedy ◊

By

Ruth McEnery Stuart

Author of "Sonny," "Sonny's Father," etc.



McCLELLAND, GOODCHILD & STEWART
TORONTO

1915

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Oh, some seek bread — no more — life's mere subsistence,

And some seek wealth and ease—the common quest;

And some seek fame, that hovers in the distance;

But all are seeking rest.

FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE.

The Cocoon

THE COCOON

Seafair Sanitarium, Va.,
Feb. 17, 1913.

My dear Jack:

I am a cocoon; or must I say *in* a cocoon? Is the cocoon the shell or the shell *and the worm*? Dictionaries are downstairs and "hours for consultation" limited. I saw that posted on the wall as I came through the corridors, but maybe it doesn't refer to the dictionaries. Anyway, I'm it — the poor worm going into oblivion to get its wings.

It's on the roof — the cocoonery — and the cocoons are of the long and narrow variety. Basically, they are single cots into which a certain youth of mountaineer suggestions and æolian drawl tucks every human worm which comes up for transformation. Officially he is "roof-steward."

When I reached his domain this morning I

fairly gasped over the wonder and beauty of the scene. All the south, sea-space, sky and water, "wedded in infinity." The east, nearly all sea. West, likewise. Then the solid north, a rim of vari-tinted green, vivid pines straggling down to the water's edge; hoary live-oak bearded with Spanish moss, dignifying without breaking the line, and offering a fine foil to the gnarled but resolutely young magnolias which stand around like the urban bachelors who live in our city clubs, groomed to the limit, erect, polished, even offensively redolent of the perfumes with which they naïvely embalm the cherished remains of their dead but unburied youth.

Between green of shore and blue of sea is a strip of gleaming sand, white enough to delight a dentist and, to my mind, grimly suggesting the perpetual border war between the two elements confronting each other, the sea tirelessly aggressive, the land showing its teeth and holding its own.

But the most wonderful thing of all is the smell — or, I do believe I must make that plural, for even now as I sniff, there come to me hints of mingled sweets. First, permeating all

things, is the ubiquitous pine which sings itself into your consciousness, titillating your ears with needly cadences; but before you can say, "How sweet the pine is!" you are realising roses and daffodils. I could go out now and gather a bathtub of jonquils within a stone's throw of the Sanitarium; this, with the beauty and music of the sea thrown in. Oh, the sea! How I love it!

Do forgive so much description, dear Jack. You know I'm not given to it, and I'll probably never offend in this way again, but just now, at first, let me share my delight with you.

Really, when I came up and looked around and sniffed, I fairly giggled with pure sensuous delight. I wanted to be good as I stood there. It is heavenly, Dear; yes, even Heavenly with a capital H.

And, by the way, lest I forget: I've arranged to have my mail sent up by hand from the village postoffice, addressed simply to the Sanitarium, Suite 99. And you, Dear, are to direct all mail simply to Seafair, Va., P. O. Box 21. I watched the Titian-haired Juno who sorts the mail in the rotunda here, and I saw her and the blond

youth, her assistant, hesitate and smile over certain letters, even holding one up to the light before consigning it to its pigeon-hole. I couldn't stand that, so remember Box 21. I chose the number for good luck, all threes and sevens, whether you add or multiply.

I see you smiling over that "bathtub of jonquils," dear Jack. You think I'm exaggerating again, but I'm not. Why, I actually saw a bathtub filled with them, in the suite of one of the patients.

Isn't it strange how gossip reaches you before you get your hat off? When I arrived yesterday — after mail-time, Dear, or you should have had a letter — the "Receiving Matron" took me around, showing me rooms. I wanted a private bath, of course, and the only one nearly available was, is, in the south tower, to be vacated "to-morrow," which is to-day, and I'm to be in it presently. The present occupant was on the roof cocooning, so I didn't meet her.

You'd like my little suite — a fairly largish sitting-room with a bay-window to the seaward side; an alcove holding a narrow bed; a few tables and things; a row of electric buttons — and

the bath. And it's No. 99, don't forget, or yes, you may forget. Your number is 21 (box).

Well, the bathtub there was filled with jonquils. In all my life, I have never seen so many together before.

It seems that the present No. 99 — we go by numbers here, like convicts — the present 99, I say, is a little queer and she strolled out into the gardens and began to gather and she didn't know when to stop — and that's why she's leaving. The "patrol" nurse who promenades the pergola called to her that there was reason in all things and she replied that there was a reason why she kept on gathering, but she didn't say what it was.

So she not only gathered until dark but, when the moon rose, she went out again and again, just in her nightie, and the last time she came in with her lap full, she lost her way, poor dear, and walked through the lobby where the men were smoking — and it didn't look well. I've seen her to-day and she is beautiful but sad. I'm hoping she'll leave the jonquils, for I'd like to inherit them. Poor little sister!

But I began telling you about the roof and the

cocoonery, and, by the way, the cocoon is the shell. I didn't have to "consult"; I remembered.

Well, I'm happy to say, it's my first prescription, the roof. I begin cocooning to-morrow morning. Indeed, it's my only prescription, excepting sundry rubs and sprays and girdles and kneadings — just a few little things like that, not counting the sea treatments, "sand-soppings," and a lot of perfectly fascinating bare-foot stunts. Nothing to swallow and gag over. I noticed the word "thermo-electric" on my treatment-card and it looks a bit scary, but I don't mind, so long as I don't have to swallow the thing and you not here to wrap it in preserves and to fan me and change the subject.

I've got old Dr. Jacques for my physician and I was greatly complimented at his taking me, for he assumes only special patients now. He just walks around, smiling in his white halo, and seems to impersonate the love of God, all unconsciously, of course.

He took me on sight, just as you did, poor Jack, on my looks. You see, you were not here

to warn him. He looked me over, really scientifically, and then he turned his kind old eyes on me and they seemed to say, "Crawl in, little one, and forget. Be a worm for a while."

Of course, I am in a sense honoured in being his patient and yet, I don't know — exactly. Unfortunately, or fortunately, according to how one looks at it, I overheard him say to one of the young doctors of the staff when he'd been putting me through my paces, "I think I'd better handle that little brand myself." Just that way he said it and what do you suppose he meant? Did he refer to some special brand of woman — or of nerve tire — or the kind of brand one snatches from the burning — or just a common, every-day firebrand? In other words, does he regard me as an interesting patient or an element of danger? Maybe I'll ask him when I know him better, though I doubt it. Haloes always silence me, somehow, and, too, there is a note of finality in all he says. And yet he isn't without humour either.

For instance, seeing his professional glance turned upon me this morning, I said playfully,

"When you look at me that way, doctor, it seems to me you can see right through me. How's my vermiform appendix to-day?"

"Oh, it's just as I expected to find it," he smiled out, "curled with a curling-iron and tied with a blue ribbon"; and then, lest I should presume upon his condescension, perhaps, he added as he rose to go: "A few weeks on the roof for you — and then, we'll see. Maybe you'd like to go sand-sopping on the beach — a little later."

"Oh, I'd love that," I replied.

"Yes, they all love it from the roof—and after a while they love it for itself. That's where we give them their final tan and their grit ——"

"I brought my sand and grit with me," I vulgarly interrupted, but he was gone and I felt like a glib little fool, as I so often do. Evidently he thinks me frivolous just because I play around a tragic situation.

There are boats to hire at the pier, both sail and row boats, but to go there one must have a doctor's permit. It seems that some nervous patients ven't been able to resist the call of the deep as they heard it at the pier, and so ——

Feb. 18.

My dinner-tray came in just here, yesterday, and after dinner there were things to do, not *by* me, just *to* me — treatment-card obligations, you know, steamings and things, and that's why I sent only the telegram. I've been on the roof all this forenoon and it's great. I just went up and nodded to the æolian youth whose name, by the way, I find to be Jefferson Davis Beauregard Johnson, and in a jiffy he had me tucked in quite out of sight, out in the full sunlight with all possible wind-exposures, one of a row of the most uninteresting and non-committal cocoons you ever saw.

At first glance, it looked like a prospect of a survival of the fittest and as if you might be at this moment taking all the chances there are of early widowerhood; but not so. The comfort of the worm is beyond words. The fluffy comfortables which cover us are riotous in colour and design, but I soon forgot the green dragons which were chasing red vultures through a purple expanse over my submissive person when I was submerged in the lulling softness of their un-

dersides while the unadulterated air of heaven was mine for the breathing.

My first impulse was to study astronomy. I'll never have such another chance, I know, unless I prove too good for this world and go to live among the stars and, even then, the perspective would be lacking. But while I was trying to locate Jupiter and to find Saturn's rings, I fell asleep and slept nine hours. Think of it! I who haven't been able to snatch two consecutive hours for a year.

When I came to, I didn't know where I was for a minute and then there issued from the cocoon next to mine a sudden snort and I dodged and drew in my head. I had just poked it out the least bit. You see, you can't tell a thing about the occupants of these cocoons from their outsides. It's a case of "All cocoons look alike to me."

But I tell you, Jack, that snort was terrific — and so near! It transformed the cocoonery for me. It became instantly a menagerie of wild beasts. I lay very still, my heart thumping and imagination running riot for about ten minutes — it seemed an eternity — when suddenly, with-

out any warning, the covers of the snorting cot flew up, and with a gymnastic spring there stood, within three feet of your wife, a brigand, if there ever was one — deep-set eyes, long ringlety hair, loose joints, square shoulders — and the whole, six feet six I should say, and lowering.

My heart didn't get any better as he unfolded and stood. You see, I had fallen asleep thinking of butterflies in the making and I half expected to see wings emerge, figuratively at least, as the layers would begin to unroll.

I don't know who he is, the brigand, but he's somebody, if only a high adventurer. But while I was recovering from him, he having in the meantime stalked away, the cot next beyond his changed contour and an old lady sat up, laboriously pulled herself together, gathered up a Boston bag, a hot water bag in a knitted case, a tippet, a plaid shawl and a copy of the *Transcript* and toddled away. She was almost *too* true to type. I wished there might have been something missing, but there never is, not in ye Bostonian. Of course, I know just about what she had in her bag, but I'm not telling.

Well, then I found myself guessing and I've been at it ever since. Lots of colourless bromidic people here and several delicious sulphites already in my eye, besides the brigand. Oh, it's immense! No more astronomy for yours truly. I fear you are badly married, Jack dear, for your wife is of the earth earthy, so easily is she seduced from the way of high thinking!

It's the charm of uncertainty. A star is always a star, and when you know it and its routine, its very consistency makes it a dull jewel; but this menagerie—it keeps you guessing. You know there's a human worm in every cocoon and the very fact of its being there proves that it's in the play; one of the *dramatis personæ* in the great tragedy of "Life and Death." We're all in it, whether we realise it or not. I know I'm cast for something and sometimes I'm afraid to stir lest I jostle my cap and ring my bells. Of course mine must be a comedy part with my playful nose and yellow hair.

There's a lot of printed matter distributed here, Jack. It's a bit didactic, but wholesome. You know how I hate that word, wholesome. For

years it ruined my celery and now it threatens my spine which we are urged to devour, because it contains iron, forsooth. I always suspected that it exuded its own arsenic for colouring and seized it voraciously in consequence.

Another thing, letter-writing is discouraged. Hence this longest-letter-I've-written-in-a-year. I can't help it. I'm made that way. No more of our old cipher for me excepting the one word "Wad," and you'll never forget precisely what it means, "I am sorry, Husband of my Heart, but money wholly dissolved. Kindly remind me." Ordinary letters, italics or capitals, as usual, to indicate the urgency of action; "*wad*"—so—meaning just general exhaustion; "*wad*"—thus—in italics, pretty hard up; but "WAD,"—all capitals—well, it wouldn't hurt to telegraph relief to the capital "WAD." But I'm going to be economical. I know this is costing you a lot.

And don't worry. I'm as comfy to a degree. My wee bed is semi-sofa and ultra-clean and is conveniently placed for forbidden reading in bed; and as for service, pressing a button in reach of my hand over my pillow will bring me anything

from a growing orchid to a masseuse in livery, with her bottle of cocoanut oil and alcohol — and her smile.

I've been here hardly two days and I'm on to that institutional smile and, frankly, I'm too tired to stand much of it, and that isn't all. One official visiting lady — I say she's official, just from the consistency of her service—well, she doesn't hesitate to tell you that she loves you. She has told me so twice already and I was beginning to wonder if perchance I might be so obviously lovable that strange women were beginning to tell me so, when the loving visitant happened to cross the roof, passing between our cots, and I heard a voice say in a muffled tone, "Aren't you glad she loves you?" and the general titter which followed gave me my cue.

I don't intend to stand it, dear Jack. If she tells me she loves me to-morrow, I'll say, "Oh thanks, awfully. So you told me yesterday." And I don't think she'll keep it up.

It's not because the poor thing is wall-eyed and her braids don't match her hair, nor yet on account of her parenthetical smile which is the worst ever. I realise that she is smiling against

big odds and I give her credit for it; but no living woman shall by word or act make love to me; no woman, and only one man.

Don't think I am unkind. I know she's my sister and so is a Zulu grandmother and I have brotherly or sisterly love for them both, in a way — far away. I'd like a sort of foreign missions relation with them. She quotes Scripture, too, and of course she has a right to; but you see, I have my own Bible and I'm too tired. If she says any more Bible at me, I'm going to say, "Yes, and you'll find the same thing in the Koran," and that'll frighten her into silence. It's a safe thing to say to almost anybody.

Sanitariums, or sanatoria, are supposed to be monotonous and maybe they are, after a while, not at first. Anyhow I don't mind. I can just turn out the light and unchain my mind and here you come, smiling, smoothing my hair and telling me how lonely the canary-cage is without me, till I fall asleep. "Loved by thee," as Browning says.

Your desolate, loving wife,

BLESSY.

P. S.

If this letter is dull, dear Jack, remember it's

just the introduction. When these sulphites begin moving, things are sure to hum. But I started this postscript to remind you, dear, to change your underthings with the weather. Three thicknesses in the bottom drawer, beginning at the left end; thin, thicker, thick. It's thicker weather now, middle of the drawer and thick threatening, I see by New York papers. Isn't it funny for thick to be thicker than thicker? Gracious, how I miss you!

Suite 99, Seafair Sanitarium,
SEAFAIR, Va., Feb. 19, 1913.

I went down to supper to-night, John (you know how forlorn I feel when I call you John), and I have seen the other patients as they foregather at feed-time and well ——!

Pamphlet No. 1 says they "do not take any insane here" and, of course, I believe them, but it takes faith. The dining-room is handsome and well-appointed, but I don't want to go into it ever again — not ever! It's *the* most depressing! You know how jolly we are always at table. Well, I went down just to be cheered up, and ye gods! One would have supposed speech had

been forbidden. An occasional remark, yes, about as long as, "Pass the panada," or, "Poorly, thank you," but nothing beyond. Actually, I could hear them swallow.

Of course I couldn't see myself, but if I looked as if I belonged to that crowd, God help me. Not that I blame them. If people are miserable — well, they are miserable and of course the obligatory smile doesn't apply to the patients. I nearly wrote inmates, although prisoners would be even better, for it's quite the thing for one to ask another what he's "in for."

Of course the wretched souls come to the dining hall to be nourished, and doubtless they are. I scorn to be "nourished." Don't bite your moustache. I see you doing it. If I'm ridiculous, that's what you get for marrying an idiot.

Feb. 20.

(And the sea growly.)

I wouldn't mail that little scrap, dear Jack — or even sign it. It was like the sea to-day, grumpy — and besides, idiot is such an outlandish word to end a letter with.

Suppose we don't write any more formal let-

ters. Let's just take our pens and write as we say things when you are on your side of the library table and I'm stirring the fire. I seem to be stirring fire all the time, one way or another.

The name of it's nostalgia, the thing I've got, but "taking me out o' this," as Bridget says, will cure it, so let's forget it; but it's awful while it lasts — simply awful. Napoleon had it at St. Helena and they say it's epidemic at all the American pleasure resorts excepting Reno.*

My loneliest times here are the meal hours, or "service for one" on a tray. Ugh! And all the perfectly digestible foods, so offensively inoffensive! I stood it for two days; then I drove down to the village and bought some horseradish and French mustard and Worcestershire sauce and some tabasco. I got the tabasco just to put on the tray and to hear you say, "Kindly pass the hell-fire, Blessy dear." Oh, how I do miss your dear language!

"What do I do with these things?" Why, I just take one after the other and sprinkle them promiscuously over these blameless viands and

* The divorce colony.

put the dishes on the radiator for a little while and I've been quite successful thus far. The results have all been savoury and I've named them "revolt" under a general head — and they agree with me, so don't worry. It is a sort of character-building — with a temperament. The day I'm just tame-good, look for me to die; and you'll be better off, maybe, but I dare you to be happier — or busier.

I won't mail this to-day. I have to go now, for mine hour is come, so saith the treatment-card, and in ten minutes I'll be taking "salt spray followed by 1, 2, 3," these numerals, if you care to know, standing for patting, rolling and putting to sleep in a specially temperatured room, a sort of cooling-oven which reminds me of the old "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man," in which the cake finally arrives at similar treatment in the last line, you remember, "Roll 'em an' roll 'em an' stick 'em an' stick 'em an' toss 'em in the oven!"

I've had only one of these, and when I'd been turned into the oven, I really felt as if I needed only a little sugar and cinnamon sprinkled over me to make me worth a penny apiece.

And now adieu for to-day. No dates or obligations. So even this hug will be cooled before you get it, like the memory of the embrace of a dead wife. Oh, how I love to hate this place!!!!

BLESSY.

(I feel like signing myself Cussy, instead of Blessy, I'm that rebellious.)

Feb. 21st.

Dear Jack:

A choppy sea, spurty showers and short answers from everybody.

When I v t about short answers I had forgotten my chamber-maid. She, who is the soul of amiability and altogether a delight in her naïve talk, says, "It looks like as ef it's a-fixin' to rain," but she says it as a bird sings. These musical southern voices have something elemental about them. Sometimes they seem even verging on tears, without being depressing, either.

She calls back, "Oh revore!" as she goes out, after sweeping my room. I asked her this morning what she had said, feigning not to have heard, and she replied chuckling softly, "Oh

I say 'oh revore' just for style. Some says, 'Over the river' an' again some says, 'Olive oil,' but I say ef you say a thing, say it right." You see, she comes of the poor white class of the hills which knows no caste and, really, I enjoy it. This institution is a godsend to these people. They come from the turpentine country, most of them, and strongly suggest the Craddock types.

This girl, whose name is Malviny-May — long i — asked me what my given name might be — she pronounced it "giving" — and when I told her "Doriana Myrtilla," she repeated slowly, "Do-ry-any Myr-til-ly, I'd never get that pronounced in Kingdom come, so I reckon I'll stick to the Mrs." And so to test her, I added in a friendly way, "I have been called Blessy for short," which pleased her, for she answered, "Well, that's somethin' like. An' now, Blessy Heminway, if you'll gether up yore frock-tail so's I can pass this sweepin'-broom around them doll slippers o' yores, we'll git shet o' some of these germs we hear so much about," and there wasn't the ghost of a smile on her face when she said it. I should say the mountaineer's first

characteristic is seriousness. I find it here just as in the valleys of the Catskills and Adirondacks, seriousness and anemia. Somehow they seem correlated.

I went down to the Swedish house yesterday, Jack, and it's great fun. You know the "Swedish" is a system of physical exercises and "treatments" as they are called, same as Christian Science, only different — quite different.

You remember the quaint little cottages we saw in Sweden, or more particularly in Norway at Frognasaeter near Voxenkollen, out from Christiania. Well, this Swedish headquarters is like these — all wood-carving over rafters and everything, mostly grinning grotesques. Even the drinking-water is drawn from the mouth of a depressing gargoyle which appears nauseated, and it is disagreeable. The poor thing is sick at a stomach which he has not.

But the treatment-room with all its paraphernalia in action is tremendous. Everything goes by electricity; no end of whizzing, whirring, jostling contraptions at once. The one most in demand now, at which women wait in line for their turns, is a pair of jolting arms to which the

patient presents her hips for their elimination. They do a lot of fantastic manipulations, these wooden arms do, and I'm told they are guaranteed to remove every hip utterly if faithfully applied, so that the modish hipless garments will fit. If hips come back into fashion, no doubt some other part of the anatomy will go out, so there will always be work for the eliminators to do.

In the old days our grandmothers were hour-glasses; now we are lead pencils, and I wonder what our daughters will be, or even ourselves next. This navigating in one trouser-leg can't last forever.

But the star performance in the "Swedish" is the flesh-reducing horse, a wooden beast with the head of a nightmare. When I saw it, an amazonian lady with loose red curls was in the saddle and the fiery untamed going at full gallop; but the humour of the picture lay in the rider's serious expression of Sphinxlike determination. I didn't get on to what it all meant at first, none of these things being labelled, and so I was quite ingenuous when I remarked audibly, "This is all very well, but I should find it

monotonous not getting anywhere." To which the rider replied without change of muscle, "Oh, but I do. I've got down from 301 to 289 in 19 days." Then I understood and I smiled back: "I wonder, if I were to get into the saddle and turn his head the other way, if I might get up from 93 to 120 in five weeks?" And not a soul laughed. This is a deadly place.

You see, I've shortened the time, Jacky dear. I can't stay away from you for three months, not from you! If I'd married anybody else — or if I were anywhere else — but not here and from Jack Heminway! Nixy!

She rides of Tuesdays and Saturdays and I'm going to stop in on my way to the "Facial" on those days. Why! she's as good as a movey with a chance for variation. Forgive this reference to my own treatments. Any ordinary wife in a reformatory like this would fill up her letters with institutional detail about herself, but you'll never have another reference from me, unless some accident should happen as, for instance, I should be electrocuted in the "static" or sun-struck in the solarium or moon-struck in

the lunarium or dessicated in the dryair-ium or yard-broke, falling off the roof.

Oh, yes, I'm resting! Resting for all I'm worth — I mean to say for all you are worth — resting just as strenuously as our leisure folk generally pursue their leisure, though differently, somewhat. "Rest is a change of activities." Yes, I'm res

Do stop asking me : we called on that Miss Carter. Four letters from you and Carter in three of them. Realise, please, dear Jack, that I've just come. But I'll go surely. Who is she?

Suite 99, Feb. 28th.

(And the sea flirty.)

You see, Dear-dear, I'm doing as I suggested, just writing and stopping any old time. It's more like life than formal letters. I just put in a date once in a while as the German frau drops a raisin in her dough "for a change."

Would you believe it, Jacky dear? I'm having fun.

Something's doing. Something not scheduled

in the "rest-cure," although legitimately born of it. Of course, I wanted to tell you, first thing, to make it respectable.

Listen; they don't know I'm married, here. They think I'm your sister, Miss Heminway. Even the doctors think so, and I'm in for it. I didn't understand it, for a while. And that isn't all; there are complications. It's this blonde hair, Jack — or partly that — the complications.

The mistake happened naturally enough when I arrived. The office clerk pushed the big book over to me and said, "Sign please," and so I did dutifully, writing my full name unabashed, Doriana Myrtilla Van der Weyden Heminway, just so. If he had said "Register," I'd have written proudly "Mrs. J. Dartmouth Heminway," but a signature is a signature and he said "Sign" — said it in a voice accustomed to command. It seems that you didn't explain that your sister, Miss Heminway, decided at the last not to come with your wife — and I'd forgotten all about it.

Now, Jack, was it my fault — the mistake? And am I to blame if I don't look married? I

didn't make my profile. Of course, nothing serious is happening—but be still. Don't wriggle. And don't rush a letter down here inquiring about your "wife"? I may ask you to do it, when the time is ripe—but not yet. Trust things to me.

There are already two men in the case, three, I mean, for of course you are always in it with me. Two besides. But remember, there's safety in numbers,

Goodnight, dear,

My head is on your arm,

BLESSY.

Written in Diary, March 1st.

Dear old Book of my Heart:

Five years and three weeks have passed since your last date, just before my wedding. Five years! And I've never needed you since—not until now and I don't need you yet; but I shall. So I'd better reopen my account with you, now while I'm calm, so that I can rush in on short notice and have heartthrobs charged to my account on your trusting pages instead of send-

ing everything home to dear, patient, long-suffering Jack.

I know already from the way things are going that I'll soon need some such outlet, just as in the old turbulent days of our courtship when you and I and no one else but God knew how utterly wretched I used to get, doubting Jack's love, mainly. What a simpleton I was, to be sure! But how can a woman know a man until she's married to him? I've been with Jack now steadily, summer and winter; here, there and everywhere; in sickness and in health; in season and out of season; and I've never needed another confidant and don't need any now, excepting for his protection, darling husband that he is.

But I know myself and I know there are sure to be little things I oughtn't to bother him about at long range and yet they'll be things I'll never be able to cast aside without a spark of sympathy — and just the telling them out to you will help us all round. It'll even warm you up, little Book, after all these years of cooling, although one would think the ardour of those early red-hot pages, many even blurred with

scalding tears, might have been counted on as a perpetual guard against chill.

I shall have no more anguish to bring your dear pages now, thank God, for the day of doubts and misgivings is past. How often I've laughed since at my crazy outpouring to you on that silly occasion when he ("he" is always Jack, of course) when he, I say, took Lydia Lawrence home from the barn dance and I engaged myself to Don Macintosh, in rage and spite, that same night on my way home to Aunt Helen's where I was staying. Oh, how I messed you all up, page after page, before I got out of that tangle!

No, this won't be anything like that, surely. I believe I'm really engaging you for my discouragements, not one of which must go to Jack again. I'll tell him the things that count and any foolishness which would seem horrible unless he knew it, like my playing on the roof. If I'd had you, I'd never have railed against this place to him as I did the other day and I mean never to do so again. I know he hates our dear little home without me there; but he never says

so now, though he wanted to break up and go to a hotel to live till I'd served this sentence — but I wouldn't let him.

I think his own evening lamp and his books and papers — and the phonograph if he's lonesome — make a more wholesome and sane environment for a man with a sick wife than the rotunda of a hotel with its vulgar dress parade — and Jack thinks so too, now.

There are fleas in this jail, Bookie! Now, that's a thing I'll never tell Jack, for I know it would worry him. I caught one day before yesterday and missed about seventy, I should say, before I caught this one and the rest must have got scared and hopped off, for I didn't feel them again. They blow over from the Downer kennels on Frog Island, whenever a strong wind favours them, so they are high-class fleas with the blood of the best registered hounds in their veins, which is small comfort to us roofers when they drop in on us.

No, he'll never know about the fleas unless he sneaks in and confers with you again. That's the one unworthy thing I've known Jack Hemingway to do in these five years — to run across you

looking in my bureau drawer for his mileage-ticket and to gloat over my last heart-throb — and then to make amends by giving me those pearls. I've noticed very often, Book of my Heart, that untimely gifts of gems are apt to represent a husband's shortcomings — but one little thing like that in five years and three weeks isn't a bad record for my Jack — and then I have the pearls.

The time he brought me that emerald pendant just out of a clear sky, no birthday or anything, I looked around to see what he'd been up to, but he was so dear and the emeralds so becoming that I grew ashamed and forgot all about it.

Seafair, Va., March 2nd.

(And the sea roaring.)

Dearest Jack:

Perhaps an occasional conventional beginning may be a good thing, just as we dress for dinner once in a while when we're camping in the mountains so the chipmunks will know what class of people they are entertaining.

Well, guess who they are, Dear — the two

men? But how could you, not knowing anybody here? So I'll up and 'fess. One is an Englishman, Canadian, that is, and a gentleman; and the other—? the BRIGAND—who isn't a brigand at all. I take delight in writing him so, though. It makes things go faster.

The Canadian—I said he was a gentleman, and after that he's a poet and a soldier, that is to say, he writes delightful verse and reads it divinely—to your "sister" on the roof—and, for the soldier part, he's an ex-Something-or-other of the English army. Personally, he's a widower (I suspect) and pompous—or, no, not at all pompous for an Englishman—and his favourite pastime, when not reading to her, is to inspect your sister covertly from behind his book.

He is tall, square-shouldered, spare and graceful, with that fine masculinity which seems to despise personality even while engaged in its highest expression; and he is so unequivocally well bred that one feels a sort of protection in his presence. Indeed, you see he resembles you, Dear, in several respects besides his taste in women.

The Brigand is, of course you'll agree, utterly unlike him in these qualities, though a good sort, I'll venture. He is a tireless talker in about s'teen queer lingos, largely Pacific slope slang, I heard a man say, and he can rattle pidgin English so fast that, if you shut your eyes, you'd expect on opening them to see a pigtailed Mongolian standing before you. As to the polite languages, I don't know. I should say he'd picked up all he knows chiefly — well, not from books.

When a muffled voice asked this morning on the roof what we thought of him I answered quickly from under cover, "I should say he's a promoter from Everywhere," which brought down the house, otherwise, shook the cocoons.

He has a Chicago accent, owns a banana plantation, edits a Free-thought paper, has been confirmed in the Episcopal Church, was later ordained to the Campbellite ministry, then began to dabble in Buddhism and now boasts Pantheistic leanings; and from his fluent pronouncements upon Free Trade and Single Tax, not to say Home Rule and Universal Peace, one comes to think of him as a sort of composite.

I haven't "met him" exactly. Of course, we all nod to each other in passing. It seems to be a sort of "misery loves company" etiquette. And yet, although she has but this negligible acquaintance with him, the Brigand is pursuing your sister, all the same, and a huge, swarthy girl from Butte, Montana, is pursuing him. I hate to say a thing like that about any woman, but truth is truth. She is interesting pictorially; not otherwise. She wears long, black braids down her back, tied with red bows, and strides like an Amazon, in the wake of the Brigand.

She's in for somnambulism and I'm afraid of her. She plays the flute, which is incongruous. She even plays it in her sleep, would you believe it? Fortunately it is a soft-toned flute, but any flute playing irresponsibly up and down the corridors at midnight is trying to nervous patients. I don't like it particularly, myself, and I find it bothers me almost more when it isn't playing than when it is. I've been kept awake quite a little, really, just dreading that imminent flute playing outside my door at all

hours and picturing to myself the wide-open, unseeing eyes of the somnambulist.

Remember Edward Lear's limerick?

"There was once a young lady of Butte
Who played on a silver-glilt flute."

Well, here she is, in life, though I never thought of her till this minute. Our poor player is pathetic enough. She carries that flute wherever she goes. They did try to wrest it from her, tactfully, one night, but it waked her and she threatened to leave, which, of course, they wouldn't hear to, as she has the most expensive suite on the floor.

They do say that she played at the Brigand's door, one midnight, in the absence of the patrol-nurse who had gone to answer a bell; but they can't suspect her of anything underhand when she plays the flute and is sound asleep besides.

The things she plays sleeping are the weirdest, like the wails of a lost soul. I'm telling you about this girl — oh, yes, she's a girl anywhere between thirty-nine and forty, but distinctly girlish, more's the pity — because the

patrol says she told her that the Brigand was her fiancé.

She sand-sops on the beach and when I look down upon her, her red bow stands out among the soppers like a beacon. By the way, sand-sopping is especially recommended for insomnia, and I can see how it might be lulling.

The patients are undressed in little bath-pavilions and each has an attendant who leads her or him out barefoot over the warm sand to the sop-holes, which really look more like graves than anything else, being about half full of a sort of loblolly of hot-ish wet salt sand. As the patient is laid in place, the sop-robe, which I find is popularly called a shroud and opens at the back, is pulled away and fresh covering of sand heaped over him until the entire garment is freed, and he lies snugly imbedded. There are some, I know, who insist upon a sleeve and free arms and who take a book along, but sleep soon overtakes them; and the attendants have very watchfully to guard against their sleeping into rapidly rising tides, for it has happened, once at least, that one found himself embarrass-

ingly undressed by a single swish of an incoming wave, with some resulting confusion.

Talking of the Butte, she's frightfully unpopular, somehow, and so, of course, I warm to her. They never told her about her playing at the Brigand's door; but of course he knows it and he runs for his life when she looms in sight.

Well, these are the dramatis personae of my little comedy, up to date — these with the usual lot of subordinates, soldiers, chorus-girls, etc., in this case trained nurses, doctors, tray-boys and, of course, worms — mainly worms. All the stars are worms, you understand.

There's an antiquity-shop in the village, Dear, and I've found a perfectly lovely pair of George Washington andirons, just iron, but with a pedigree to make your hair curl. I haven't bought them yet, exactly, but — wad, Dear — no, WAD please. You see, they are the only pair and I'm not the only woman of taste in this calaboose. We'd never forgive ourselves if we let them slip.

Do let me alone about that Miss Carter. Of course, I intend to look her up; but remember, there are hundreds of people here and she never

shows herself. If she came to the roof or took treatments we might run against each other.

I do meet a few semi-amusing people when we are going around in our sheets, in the treatment-rooms, but the greatest time is when we are only a row of heads poking out of the tops of the thermo-electric cabinets. It's really the only social function on the card, so necessarily limited.

There are a lot of them in line and sometimes all are occupied and, as the line curves like a crescent, it's sort o' sociable. I said to a distressed face topping the box next to mine the other day, "Are you a whole woman, or just a head? I'm only a head myself or a bust, rather! Everything else is steamed away — and it's a great relief." She didn't answer, but, from the glance of alarm she gave the attendant, I am sure she was glad I couldn't get out of my steamer.

I don't know whether it's pathological or only logical that these people should show no sense of humour whatever, but it's tiresome, either way.

They say she's a beauty, that Carter girl, but they tap their foreheads when they mention her,

so I can't say I'm thirsting for that visit, exactly — but I'm going — don't worry. "A friend of a friend of Oglesby," you say? Of course, I'll go, Dear.

And remember, WAD, and as I'm not telegraphing it, there'll be no time to spare. Georgie will be divine, holding our logs, while Martha smiles on him from the screen.

March 5th, or 6th.

(Sunshine tempered by a mackerel sky
and cocoonery in fine form.)

Still having fun!

Our intrigue, Jack, and your "child wife" is the conspirator. I've already explained that everybody avoids the Butte (Do let me write her thus, henceforth. I started to spell it "Beaut," but that would be unkind. She's as plain as a hippopotamus, though unlike).

Also, I've told you how she can always be spotted in a landscape by her long braids which look like jute. Indeed, a very young fellow here who has one of those finnikin little minds that run to trivial jokes, took out his note-book as she passed, one day, remarking, "I'm just writ-

ing down jute as a handy rhyme for Butte."

"Yes, and brute is another," I threw back at him. I couldn't help it. I hate underbred personalities. He writes squibs for humour-pages and has an expression of expecting-to-be-laughed-at whenever he opens his mouth and I imagine price-tags on all his little jokes — mainly "30c." I know he hates me, but I'm not worrying, but I don't see why he keeps hanging around. They say he was a cracker-jack reporter before he fell ill. He's here "recuperating," of course. Everybody is.

But the conspiracy:

The Brigand, you know, is an unequivocal person. He either loves or he hates; and just as violently as he detests the Butte, he admires your sister; and, strange to say, equally is the Butte distasteful to the Canadian.

She's a parlour-elocutionist, poor huge thing, and she recited one of the Canadian's poems in the chapel here the other evening in a sort of vaudeville of resident talent, did it "with motions" and awful flights, and when she had done the author was not there. He had escaped through an open window, into the night.

I had heard the poem before in the poet's cultured voice, on the roof, and even I suffered in her rendition. Her notes were as the winds of March shrieking through the garden of the gods.

But I keep getting away from the conspiracy—and the fun.

You understand, Dear, the object of the coconery is rest-in-the-open. No cocoon is supposed to become a social centre. Well, mine was being threatened. It's considered quite allowable for a comrade to stroll along and stop for a word occasionally, unless the worm is closely veiled—and, of course, excepting in a certain "Silent Section" to which I never go. It's too deathlike.

But I have tried to hide—tried variously. I've gone up early before the crowd and had Beauregarde Davis tuck me in—and I've changed my location, but somehow—?

It's my hair, Jack. You always declared it was luminous and I believe you are right. Certainly, its slightest vagrant strand will catch the sunlight, somehow. I often believe myself safely hidden in my bunk and the first thing I

know, a tall shadow looms and a Voice asks if it is intruding ("ahsks" it, in fine limpid English), and I tell the social lie universal and before you could say Jack Robinson, the Canadian has camp-stooled himself beside me and is "ahsking my candid opinion" of an original poem which he "reads" from an imaginary book, or regaling me with anecdotes of well known personages, none of whom has he professed to know, which is very modest of him. Of course, I like it. Who wouldn't — and he the most attractive man here?

Besides, he is, in some occult way, appealing. I can't quite describe it. It's the intangible something that made me guess him to be a widower. Sometimes I suspect that he has a secret sorrow and when he gets pretty close, as in reciting some delicate passage with telling effect, I feel half frightened lest he should suddenly entrust me with some awful confidence. I don't mean a declaration. That would be unspeakable and would instantly quash all these merriment proceedings, for, of course, in such a calamity, I'd have to reveal myself in my true colours.

As things are now, my position is wholly negative and I've done nothing. They take me for a girl and I just drift along — and I'm telling the only person who would have a right to object. But, of course, the Canadian will never do anything impulsive or ill-advised — not a gentleman of English blood; and taking him by and large, he contributes greatly to my semi-contentment here.

All of which, though very pleasant, isn't exactly restful, you'll agree, and I'm doing this cocoon stunt to get well and strong — doing it for you, Beloved, and for nations yet unborn, if the gods are kind, and I owe it to you *and to them* to do it as expeditiously as possible. You understand, don't you, Dear?

And isn't it great that there's nothing wrong with me but tire — just tire? — and “With rest and sane living” there's hope for everything. I'm so glad we had this all threshed out before I came to this place so I don't have to take anybody into my confidence, and I tell you, Jacky dear, this girl business has its advantages. It's the first time in five years when I've been among strangers over-night that some one hasn't asked

me if I had any children. I suppose it would be expecting too much to have the world realise how this question stabs the childless woman.

And it has other advantages, too, this being a girl again — other advantages besides the questionable one of the personal tribute of the detached male. Of course I realise I'm declining the open gate for these diverting byways, but I'm escaping all the same.

I notice that the women exchange glances and edit their recitals about their surgical experiences when I appear, and one good woman even remarked in a stage whisper quite in my hearing, "Sh! She's only an innocent girl an' I know I wouldn't thank anybody for telling my daughter such things. I think the less a girl knows about life the better for her. She ain't half so liable to turn against it."

"That's just what I always say," agreed her neighbour. "I know when I was married, I didn't know a thing. Why, I was 'most as tall as my mother when I used to slip out into the cabbage-patch and search any suspiciously big heads to see if I could find any trace of the babies, I was that pure-minded — and it was

just as well. Now they tell me the girls and young men go together to eugenic play-acting and lectures. I can't help wondering what they'll have to talk about after they get married. They'll discuss books then, I reckon."

"Yes, and that ain't the worst of it," sighed the other, shifting an ice-bag on her person as she spoke, "that ain't the worst of it. They say the girls are losing interest, now everything is explained. I suppose if I'd known as much beforehand as I do now, I wouldn't be holding ice-bags over surgeon's stitches the way I am to-day. I'd 've had the foresight to keep clear of it—and yet, taking it all in all, I'm glad I didn't know any better, for I've got nice children if I do say it; but if things keep on the way they're going, we'll have a race of old maids, I suppose."

This was down on the beach porch, and when presently the speakers went in, a superior voice threw out from behind a book: "Where do you suppose those ladies are from?" and instantly a mannish chirp from a nest of quilts in a steamer-chair replied:

"Oh, they're from Bungaloton down in Bun-

galocust County where they cultivate Bungalotus flowers for eastern bungalos." And pushing back the covers, the little joke-man emerged and tripped away, looking like a picked chicken. You know he's lost his hair. He *is* funny!

But oh, Jack, isn't the average American a diverting creature! Living in New York as we do, with picked minds for daily social fare, and going to hear the questions of the hour threshed out by the picked of the picked and presented coherently, it is delicious to come across the untutored play of thought in the remote fringes of progress.

As I lay in my bunk, reflecting on this naïve discussion, I sent up a little prayer and thanksgiving, too, on our account, yours and mine. Isn't it a blessing to know that we are eugenically sound, you and I, so we needn't fear when we know *he* or *she* is on the way to us — or they! How I'd love for it to be *they*! Two you's or two me's or one of each of us!

Oh, if only this may be our reward for this incarceration! My prospective wellness for its own sake pales before this looming joy. Think of longing to be well, just to be strong enough to

assume the master pain, Dearest — but oh, the master reward!

You know how I always longed for a boy — or boys — but I want to tell you now that I'm quite willing to have anything you want, even just one girl (one at a time, I mean); but don't require me to bequeath the poor little thing my yellow hair. I know whereof I speak and yellow hair on the head of an even semi-serious woman with a suspicion of an intellect is a fearful handicap. I'm feeling it right now, in this warfare.

If, for instance, I were a dark-haired, demure woman with a profile like Dante or George Eliot or Seneca, I could lie out in my cocoon and take all the benefactions of the roof without interruption; or if my soul matched my giddy little head throughout (I don't deny that even it has its yellow-haired side) things would be simplified and I'd take the roof's chances of fun without a qualm.

But to return to more worthy thought — I'm reading up on eugenics like mad. Got the book out o' the library here. Maybe when the time comes for us, we'll have arrived at something

definite, so that I can say to you, in effect, "If you'll keep your hands off my boy, I'll promise not to interfere with your girl," which will mean that I can have my dark-haired, high-foreheaded, intellectual little son, just like you — and won't it be too cunning if he's just near-sighted enough to have to wear your specs? You know, dear, near-sight in youth means normal vision at the other end, when gifts are sparse and precious, so there's no harm in wishing our Junior to have your dear eyes to begin with.

Oh, Jack, when I think of him, I can hardly wait; and even if you insist on thinking my trivial hair onto his innocent head, I'll not say a word. Isn't it great fun to blame you if he inherits my hair? Oh, Jack!

But talking about the children, Jack, a new thought has come to me here, out of the blue, a great thought. You see, with no invitations or telephones or anything to break the monotony, whenever I'm not doing anything formal, I'm thinking — and most of all, I think of the home, our dear home in which we have realised so much of joy, and which has yet, in some intangi-

ble way, failed of the full satisfaction promised.

And from that I began to consider other homes, as they appear, modest homes chiefly, looking for joy-signs, and then, getting down and down in the scale, I seemed to come to great places where numbers of people lived together only because there seemed no other way, until I found myself standing at the door of an orphan asylum.

I needn't tell you I hadn't sought the asylum. To me they are dreadful places. Mother used to be on the Board of Lady Managers of a lovely one when I was little, a great stone mansion set in grounds, with gardeners, and flower-beds in long rows and fancy shapes — and there were "modern improvements," I remember, artificial aëration and cooking and sewing classes, and what they had the nerve to call "family prayers" because all the little unformed orphans used to shout "Amen!" as they rose from their knees and filed out in procession, looking so serious and weak-eyed and clean.

Mother used to take me with her on Board

days, sometimes, and I remember the girls sitting on benches in the yard crocheting yards and yards of cotton lace of the same pattern, and sometimes mother would buy it and have it sewed on my pantalettes, and whenever I wore them, I'd seem to see the pale girls in rows at work, sometimes measuring their lace, one with another, and talking a little lower than the children I knew talked when they were together.

I remember even the baby ward as a depressing place — each baby tagged with its name and number — and one day when I was there I begged to hold one of the babies and the nursery matron put a big-eyed, serious little thing in my eager twelve-year-old arms and I began to love and to hug it as we always had done our home babies.

At first, the little thing braced itself against my chest and eyed me wonderingly — but presently, while I caressed it, it flung its thin arms around my neck with a little cry and nearly choked me to death and wouldn't let me go till the matron cautiously forced its grip.

I was crying, too, when finally she took it from me, for I was a sensitive little creature and

I suppose, even then, strongly maternal. And I am the same yet, Jack. Why, half my joy in life now is in mothering you when you have colds and things; and no one will ever know what satisfaction I took in your bone-felon, Jack.

It gave me my first chance to lose sleep on your account, and sometimes it seems to me the life of a woman is never full until she has something to lose sleep over—once in awhile—something she loves. Not that I'd have you ever get another bone-felon, for anything on earth; but really, when you got better of that, and, as Bridget would say, "middlin' independent," I was lost for a while.

Then, you remember, you got the canary, and we amused ourselves with his notes and his daily needs for a while. But he was a bachelor bird and he soon became monotonous, until the day God sent me enlightenment and I knew that the brave little fellow was singing his heart out to some remote, abstract mate, and I went out and brought home that cage of lady birds and let him choose his partner and we started them in housekeeping.

And then came the nest-making and watching — then the stirring and the joy of the little ones. Oh, Jack, it's the way of life! The only way to fulness of joy! The young birds in the nest! The children, the children!

In my study of homes, joy seemed to follow the perambulator. Children's voices singing under trees. The playing of "scales" on cracked pianos. A rain-washed doll lying inside a small gate — joy-signs, all.

Only when I got to the imposing portal of the big house where the unclaimed or unwanted were collected, unparented and unloved; only in the affluent, poor, crowded, lonely asylum were the joy-notes all missing. Even when the young things took out their second-hand toys to play (permission accorded with a glance at the clock by a perfectly proper starched person in charge) I noticed that there was slight interest shown in them. The children all seemed to have their eyes on the clock, too, for putting-away time.

Do I seem to be turning ultra-sentimental — I who am so frivolous generally? I am light and volatile, Dear, but maybe it's mainly on the surface.

Frivolity blooms in my hair, I know, and dances in my feet and rings in my laughter, but my heart is in the right place, Dear, and there are times when it suffers and is lonely over things which my head and my feet and my voice ought to be able to help.

"What am I driving at?" I'm coming to that, now.

It's adoption, Jack. To keep waiting, year after year, until God in His own good time may or may not give us a child fashioned after our own selfish pattern, seems to me to be behaving like selfish pigs — and the orphan asylums filled to overflowing with little tagged, love-needing babies, already born — babies who don't understand a caress till they are taught.

Don't you think maybe we've thought of the children just for our own sakes, Dear? I've often wondered whatever became of the baby who clung to my neck that time. Mother never allowed me to go to the baby-ward again, because I talked in my sleep that night.

Think of our home, Jack, and our hearts and all the warm room in them! Maybe we've been a wee bit too worldly, you and I — not that I'm

half ready to turn ultra-pious. I'm not that sort. But suppose we keep our eyes and hearts open for the little one we so need and who needs us. We'll be sure to find it — or even them, in time, if our hearts are wide open.

Miss Penny Perkins told me last winter that in her settlement work she sometimes comes across darling little cherubs which she has to "place," and she is always sorry when she is obliged to send them to the big mansions with the long rows of little white beds.

Think it over, Dear, and don't answer till you are good and ready. Of course, our own, if Heaven be so good, will come along, just the same, and have something to inherit beyond selfishness.

We'll tell him or her — I'd just as lief have it a little girl, first; you always wanted a girl, and I'm not keen about a boy till there's some chance for him to take after you — so we can tell her, I say, that she's "adopted," and give her to understand that adoption is a high honour and means that she was "chosen" — and for love of us all — and we can train her to be a good older sister — Oh, Jack! — Oh, I'm sure we'll be do-

ing right, and happiness will flow in to us as a gift of Heaven, as it always does when we forget all about it and get busy doing something worth while.

I feel ever so much better, now it's all out, Dear. I fancy it won't attract you much, at first, but once you let the thought in, it grows on you. You see, for one thing, taking the selfish side, there's surety in it. We know we can have our pick of adoptable babies — and we can begin to get ready at once. And don't let's tell a soul; not even your sister Laura.

We'll find the baby — I'll go reconnoitering first, then I'll call you in and we'll select together — and I'll fit her out in dinky little clothes, and, if necessary, we'll even take her away for a little trip to get her chubby and strong before we invite the relations in.

Oh, Jack, when I think of it, and how near it may be, I can hardly wait to get out of this place. But, of course, I must get especially well for all these kinds of motherhood. And you'll have to hurry and make money, for they say the cost of a motor-car isn't in it with the modern perambulator and all it means.

Buy a Montessori book, right off, Jack, and let's study it up. We'll give the little thing the best there is in life, if we know how.

But dear, dear! Where did I leave off? Oh, yes. I was telling you about the Canadian and the roof comedy when I got off on the subject of the children — and that's always a labyrinth in which I'm lost.

But listen, now, Jack — and follow me closely, for I need your support — and your sympathy. Realise the situation. If it isn't the Canadian, whose name, by the way, is Archibald La Rue, followed by an alphabet — some *habitant* blood there, I suspect — I say, if it isn't he, it's somebody else. Several of the youngish M.D.'s have a way of coming, especially an awfully nice fellow called Welborn and conspicuously unmarried, somehow. Well, they just stroll along and chat a moment, generally making it known that they want to make sure I am comfy, don't you know?

The Bandit — Brigand, I mean to say — never comes, and never will. I have some force of character left. Occasionally the wee joke-man happens along, sparkles like a firefly and

flits. He is so short that standing is the social attitude for him.

Well, now listen: (and try not to blame me too much; it's every bit for you).

I want to go home. I must be let alone and I positively will not go into that dreadful "Silent Section," where those long-haired men and short-haired women foregather with their writing-pads to let each other alone. By the way, they say lots of poets and other cranks come here just to work. They're the chief Silent Sectioners. But I'll protect myself in the open. I'll study the stars or say the multiplication-table both ways, beginning in the middle, if I want to. Since I'm to be a worm, I'll turn like one.

Well, here's what I did:

I drove to the village and bought one of those hideous jute braids such as those with which our poor negro women disfigure their heads, and I tied a huge red bow on the end of it, exactly like the Butte's—got early into my cot and, giving Beauregarde Davis time to get busy at the opposite end of the roof, I watched my chance and slipped the braid out over my pillow, pulled in my head and went to sleep.

It was my best day. Not a soul came.

For three consecutive forenoons I worked this trick, with slight variations—three blissful mornings. But yesterday—ah, woe is me! While I lay, fairly soaking rest and giggling in my soul over it, I was suddenly roused by a familiar tread and opened my eyes to see through my veil whom but the Canadian, stopping short in his walk and looking from my cot to another across the roof from which the Butte herself was rising!

Of course, the game's up. I lay breathless and waited, but not for long. Before I could still my thumping heart, the Brigand loomed, approached gingerly, looked both ways—and snorted. (He hasn't the breeding of the Canadian.)

Then the two men went their separate ways. They are not friends. And, by the way, I was right. The Brigand is a promoter—and from about everywhere. He is said to be at this moment dickering with old Dr. Jacques for this seafont, either with or without the Sanitarium.

It seems he represents "Eastern Capital" and his Company wants to establish an "Amphibi-

ous Motor" plant, and the exceptional sea-and-sky space attract them here, with the further advantage of a deep channel near shore, so that their "Amphibs" may plunge from aerial heights, diving like sea-gulls.

Won't it be fun for the patients, if they build it next door, so to speak? The Doctor owns a mile or so of frontage here — and backage, too, for that matter. They say there's any kind of mine one might ask for on his land, and so it behooves him to sell any frontage he can spare to finance the mines. I'm trying to talk business, Dear. I made all that out of my own head about "financing" and it sounds pretty well — to me. He does own the land.

But think what fun it will be when the Amphibs give a regatta! They watch the porpoises now, the poor patients do, but Mr. Porpoise won't be in it with the 'Phibs.

He's really great fun, the Brigand, loud as loquacious and, with it all, he's as artless as a school-boy. By the way, Dear, I've been intending to ask you, what is the meaning of "Western Reserve"? I know I've heard the expression somewhere. Well, he hasn't it.

I wonder what makes me meander so when I'm writing to you. I seem to be leaving myself on the roof, in sight of the Butte, and with my replica of her braid in full evidence; but not so. She couldn't have seen it from her cot, if she'd been looking, and when she rose, it was no trick at all for me to shift my position and haul in my cable. Then, when she had gone and my neighbours had dispersed, I rose and casually strolled away.

But I was excited. I felt like an adventuress, and cruel, which is worse. When I got to my room, I threw myself on my bed, fairly shivering from mixed emotions, chiefly terror. I simply couldn't be caught at this sort of thing. And my escape was narrow, assuming that it was an escape.

I was no company for myself, I assure you, so I rang and cancelled my supper-tray order and dressed and went down to the dining-room, my second appearance there.

I wore that dream-chiffon and your pearl heart, slippers to match the dress — and my madonna expression. And, Jack, if looks count for anything, no one would have believed me criminal, even if I'd been caught in the act.

If I'd been arrested in Hell ('scuse the word) and said I was trying to find Heaven and had lost my way, Pluto would have dropped his fork and bowed politely while he called Proserpine or one of the children to hold off the dog and see me safely out, unmolested. I'm sure of it.

It was a pretty big bluff, for my size, Jacky dear, but I was hard-pressed. At the dining-room door, whom should I meet but the Canadian, face to face, and from his frank smile I read that all was well in that quarter. With the gentlest bow, almost as deferential as an American's, he came forward:

"We've been missing you, Miss Heminway?"
(Rising inflection.)

"—pleasant on the roof, to-day?" (My inflection Englished up also.)

"Lonely," was his answer. (His very first personality.)

"Lonely inside, too!" No, Jack, I didn't say it. It said itself — just took my honest tongue and used it, and I was as powerless to help it as I would be to darken my hair or pull down my nose or turn that crazy dimple wrong-side out into a peak.

Telling it now, the whole episode sounds insane, but it was exciting, and as it has afforded me my only uninterrupted rest since the first day, perhaps it was justified.

Anyway the jute braid has served its limit, but I have another scheme for to-morrow or, maybe, next day.

I may take a day off, just showing up casually in the interval, to ward off suspicion — and, too, to get over all this a little. It has given me a terrible shake-up.

But I'm really improving wonderfully, Jack, although my rest seems a little broken, as one might say. Indeed, there are times when I feel almost too well.

"All the functions smart," said the old Doctor yesterday. He's an old dear, but he hasn't the social vernacular. He little knows what a "smart function" means to me — or why I'm here.

In one sense, I'm having a perfect rest, for I am resting absolute-ly from the things I care for most — even resting from my Beloved. And I'm resting from responsibilities (plural, observe) — from the trivial things which wear

on one, like gnats getting into one's eyes.

A lion in one's path is worth while if only for the high sport of vanquishing him — but gnats! Servants! Bills! Mistakes in bills! The telephone! Wrong wash sent home! Right wash not sent out! Telephone! Soft ice-cream! Subsidized soufflé! Wrong entrée sent in from caterers, doubling home course — guests already arriving, too late to change! Telephone! Swapping "days-out" with Bridget! Telephone won't work! Telephone bill says telephone worked over time! Callers and telephone adjuster and C. O. D. parcel "to be tried on" all arrive at same moment with Angelic Husband who wonders why wife didn't arrange to have them call separately. Tears! Coaxing! Temporary control — then hysteria — Angelic Husband assumes all blame and calls himself a brute! Reconciliation and gr-r-r-eat happiness followed by "nerve disturbance"—and then this place!

Ach! Gnats! Gnats which feed the divorce lawyers and keep institutions like this out of bankruptcy. Gnats!

Why, there are times when just the memories

of them swarm so that I have to take my mind forcibly by the back of its neck and turn it into other channels—'scuse the mixed metaphor—but I'm lots better. I even see how I may come to enjoy the gnats, after a while, for your sake. I know a more demure woman with safer lines and quieter colouring might get well faster, but maybe she wouldn't get so jolly well. I begin to feel it sizzling through me already, the gleeful wellness.

Good night, Boy!
Your-hard-put-to-it
but DEVOTED,
lonely BLESSY.

Next Day.

(And the sea whistling.)

Well, I really did get to see the Carter last night, Dear, and she's a rare beauty, exquisite as a seashell, but with a haunting something in her face, half like a memory. I seemed to have seen her before, in a dream. Her hands lay in her lap like Easter lilies. She's a *great beauty*, and isn't it awful?

"Social overdoing," they say, the same old

story. I found her amiable but reticent, so I chirped along, and after a while, just to bring her into the talk, I asked her ever so gently what interested her most here and she answered unblushingly :

“The hell-hounds!”

Then, before I had time to recover, she turned her sad eyes upon me and said, “KISMET.”

No, they don't take any insane here. Really, they don't, and I'm beginning to understand. Whenever there's no “organic lesion,” whatever that is — it sounds like a pianola attachment for an organ — anyway, when they don't have it, they get well, and go home cured. They are doing it every day.

And remember, I'm going home with you when you come, Dear, lesion or no lesion. I just thought I'd tell you. I'm tired asking the doctor and being put off. But I must make good with these kind people here before I go.

There's the Brigand — and the Canadian — and sundry young M.D.'s — and the humour-page poet, et als — yes, and the poor visiting lady whom I snubbed so successfully that she no longer dares tell me how she loves me. I've even

come over to her. She's so pitiful. She'd be all right if she were exploiting some other commodity, but *love*! As an advocate of stern and forbidding DUTY, she'd be perfect. Half the failures in this life are from arbitrary assignments. You see, I'm trying to talk up to your great intellect, John Dartmouth Heminway.

What a terrific chore it must be for a worthy but vinegar-visaged person like that to have to go the rounds in a menagerie like this, and to offer sugar to the beasts only to have them growl at her and show their teeth!

Life is the great tragedy, beloved; not death. Before I leave this paradise, which it really is, I assure you, to the spiritually discerning, I mean to take that thwarted visiting-lady's freckled hand in mine and tell her I love her, and it will be true. But it must be the very last word, at the door. She mustn't have time for reciprocation. I'm too nervous yet. My spirit is growing in grace—but the flesh is weak. Here comes the mail!

Two Days Later.

I can't date this. I know it's Saturday and the wind's from the east and something like

snow-flakes swirl through the air, down here in Virginia, and the sea is a floppy wet blanket. (It's hailing, too, and thundering, inside me.)

I've done it, Jack, the other trick — and I'm nearly crazy! Did it to-day! But it was great! The jute racket was tame to it. Poor Butte! I seem to be making a butt of her, but I'm not. I'm only using the material at hand and if she's material, is it my fault?

My plan was to work the same trick, from the other end. I pinned one of my yellow curls on her pillow as I sauntered by the cot in which she lay deeply immured, then crawled into my own, and watched the fun.

I knew her cot by the flute which lay beside it and was fortunate in finding her audibly asleep. She sleeps a good deal now, in the daytime. It was early in the afternoon; only two other cots occupied at our end, and sleep echoes coming from both.

And so, as I said, I just strolled past her cocoon, stood a moment looking outward till I had managed to drop my veil over the flute, and while I stooped to pick them up together, nothing could have been simpler than to slip the curl with an

invisible hairpin onto her poor head — that is, on the pillow beside it, just beyond her possible field of vision — to find my own cocoon, to scramble into it and close up, in a position commanding the situation.

For an endless time nothing happened and I was finally dropping into sleep from sheer weariness, with the flute against my heart, when the fortuitous tramp of the Brigand, who materialised quite near me pulling his soft hat down over his eyes better to scan the roof, stopped my heart entirely.

I saw him when he first sighted the yellow curl and began to veer toward it, but before he had reached it, a vociferous snort and then another startled the roof. The Butte was dead to the world.

I never saw the Brigand convulsed before. His great joints fairly rattled and as he sham-bled away, unconsciously grazing my pillow as he passed, I heard him chuckle:

“Well. That’s one on Goldie-locks.”

He never doubted that I was the snorer. I hardly think such snoring is habitual with the Butte. It couldn’t be with any woman. It was

too awful, too cataclysmic to last, but its three or four blasts waked the cocoonery.

You know the kind — like that of your apoplectic friend who week-ended with us that summer at Oyster Bay. Do you remember how Bridget came running in to us at three o'clock in the morning, crying that there was a hog in the dining-room, and you rushed down to discover that our guest, finding his room rather close, had risen in search of a breeze and had fallen asleep in the veranda hammock? Well, the Butte's snorting was even worse than that. Poor old Hendriksen! How mortified he would have been if he had known!

Well, Jack dear, this is how the comedy of the roof began. As all the cocoons are on a level, of course no one had noticed the curl or suspected anything. When the brief paroxysm had passed, the Butte slept along fairly quietly, although she is one of those whom one can always hear sleep, being as you might say a hearty person.

But the afternoon was drowsy, warmish and tense, and your sister was getting every possible chance at the sleep she was too excited to take, when things began happening. Several of her

acquaintances tiptoed inquiringly among the cots, saw the lure, heard the sleep and passed on.

One even ventured near enough to lay a bunch of roses over her alleged feet and noiselessly creep away. Then presently came the Canadian and I felt myself blushing up to my temples, all alone in my cocoon. His well-bred presence seemed to give the whole thing its proper rating and I was suddenly heartily ashamed of it. To make matters worse, I was supposed to be expecting him, as he had asked the privilege of fetching a bit of verse for my "candid criticism," a poem entitled "The Droning of the Spring."

After a swift sweeping survey, he sped, camp-stool in hand, straight as an arrow to the cot of the yellow curl where audibly slept the young lady of Butte whose silver-gilt flute lay in my bosom.

How my heart played upon it, as I watched him! Had it been a stringed instrument, it must have responded with a wail, but my breathless panic could not call it into life, fortunately.

I watched him take his seat; saw him open his book and begin to turn pages; then I either heard or imagined that I heard his soft, "— not

intruding?" and in a moment, I fancied myself following the measures of the verse as his well modulated voice rose and fell with the rhythm. I confess, it sounded just a wee bit mellifluous to me, as I listened, but that may unconsciously have been suggested by the title, although I cannot deny that the poem has a honeyed cadence.

He has talent, this Canadian, if not a glint of genius. You must know him. You'd be thick as thieves in no time.

The Butte is a sound sleeper if a tragic one and I suspect that the Canadian as an author is a bit egoistic, as otherwise he would surely have divined that she whom he sought was not there. Authors reading their own creations sometimes seem oblivious to the world. So, saturated with his own thought, the poet read on and on. The droning droned out at last, however; but I soon discerned a resumption with change of metre and all was going evenly once more when there recurred the catastrophe of the snore. I hope never to hear its like again. It was high tragedy and, simultaneously with the explosion, a great arm was thrust out, an arm clad in a grey sweater, and then something

swirled and a long black braid actually flapped a crimson bow into the face of the gentle Canadian! A confusion of quilts followed, and all in a twinkling, the Butte was standing up, blinking — and neither Canadian nor camp-stool was anywhere in sight.

To do her justice, I do not believe the Butte had any idea that anybody had been there, for, after gazing vacantly about her as one dazed, she drawled:

“Well, I never. Drempt’ I was in a saw-mill — an’ such a funny buzzin’, like water over a wheel precisely. Ain’t it re-dic’lous!”

And she was sinking down into her bunk again when she descried the roses, fortunately turning her back upon my wretched little curl, which flickered like a yellow flame upon her pillow, scorching my eyes and burning into my soul.

“O-h!” she gasped. “His yellow roses!” And burying her face in the flowers, she burst into tears and hurried from the roof.

Time is up. I’m rushing this to mail. More anon.

B.

Written in Diary late that night:

Oh, you Book of my Heart, chum, pal, confidant — and before we get through, perhaps my confederate, even my accomplice — for aided and abetted by your receptivity and reticence, I could essay anything.

How glad I am of you! — although I come empty to-night, for all that's brewing now I'm telling Jack; and surely there's no news in this reformatory!

Oh, yes, there is, too. It's bats! I counted sixty-seven as they flapped out of a broken pane in the attic of the ten-pin alley yesterday. Sixty-seven! Think of it! And sixty-six of them I counted through the veil I flopped over my head after number one. I'm afraid of a bat as far off as I can distinguish one from a bird, and that's about as far as I can see him. I believe Jack would almost send for me, if he knew. Anyway, he'd worry. Every now and then we have bat-scares down at Oyster Bay, when one strays into our room in the night — so Jack knows!

Even if they don't tangle themselves up in women's hair, they look evil and I notice the artists generally work them into any abominations

of desolation they are trying to picture, so I say no bats for me! I even put out my light last night and gave up reading lest one should dash into my hair through the open window. They may be devils, but these will be doing angels' work if they get me more sleep.

Think of fleas and bats in this immaculate place! I was wondering this morning how that flea must have felt, finding himself in my cool cambric and lace nightie-sleeve after being blown out of the warm coat of those Frog Island col-lies. I said it out aloud, not realising the presence of Malviny-May, who was brushing up my hearth, until I saw her straighten up and lean on her broom, as she chuckled:

"Frog Island fleas! Yes, I know that's what they say; but have you took notice that the wind that would blow 'em from Frog Island would have to pass over our Seafair stables? — not sayin' anythin'. But I know I haven't never put my foot on Frog Island, but many a Sunday evenin' have I caught a lively flea on my collar, just passin' our barn — an' no wind blowin' neither — not makin' any remarks. Of course, you never know what's in the wind, an' it *could*

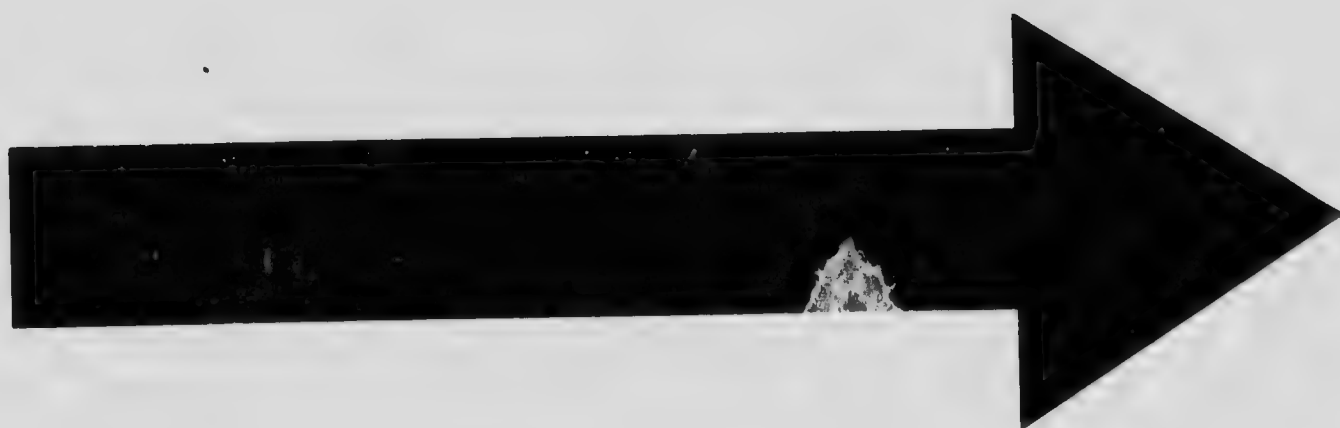
lift fleas off'n those kennels, if there was any there, an' drop 'em on our barn — if it was necessary, I s'pose."

Then languidly resuming her sweeping, she hesitated, but just for a moment.

"Dr. Welborn did have one o' the varmint under a microscope here a while back an' I heard 'em discussin' the circulation of its blood which he allowed me to put my eye to the glass an' look at, an' it cert'n'y did circulate fine; an' I told 'im he hadn't ought to miss the chance to send a drop of it down to the laboratory to find out whether it was blue pedigree Collie blood or such common red as our Seafair mongrel pups might supply, an' I wish you could 'a' heard 'em laugh; not that I see where the joke come in.

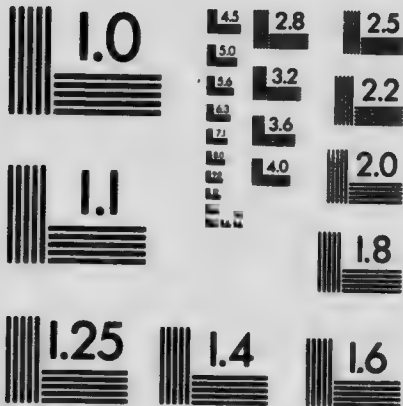
"Michael, our head stable-man, he brags that he's got more kinds o' dog in his stable than all the Downer an' Leffingwell kennels put together — an' they're all in five dogs, no two alike. He allows he likes 'em that a-way because he says, in a mixed drink is every kind of a drunk. He runs on just to pass the time, Michael does."

Really, Bookie, this strikes my funny-bone so that I'm tempted to tell Jack about it. I really



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must—but we'll keep the bats to ourselves. Dear old Jack! And to think how I used to doubt him and fairly writhe in jealousy. Nothing on earth would have power to make me distrust him now—nothing! Isn't that sort of faith great? And we've arrived at it through the daily wear and tear of five long years of steady companionship. This is our first separation and God grant it may be brief!

Why, my faith is such that if Jack were to break an engagement to dine at home in New York on account of "a Directors' meeting" (which, of course, should not occur at the dinner hour) and I should learn that he had gone to Coney Island with a chorus girl, I'd know she had been needed at the meeting and that they were holding it down by the sea for business reasons. Of course, Jack never does anything like that. I'm only imagining an extreme case.

And so, Bookie, dear, I hope you realise that the temperamental little goose who bedaubed your pages with ill-founded anguish in our callow days comes back to you now a happy woman, secure in the faith of the best man on earth.

I've just sent him one letter at the last mail-

ing moment and then kept on writing him a volume right out of my heart, to go to-morrow, telling him of all my frivolities. It's a test of confidence to write page after page of volatile stuff to a serious-minded man like Jack, but I know him and I can hear him chuckle over my giddiest escapade.

His mother wore her hair in bandeaux over her ears and dressed in *gros grain* silk with cameo brooch and lacc fichu every day, and she read "Jay's Morning and Evening Exercises" to him, daily, and selections from Paley's "Evidences" on Sundays — and he married me for a change, Jack did. And he got it, too, poor Jack!

But here I sit gabbling and I promised myself to take some of these New York roses to that poor Miss Carter — Jack will waste his good money sending me flowers for every anniversary — —

To-day is the sixth anniversary of the fourth and last time I engaged myself to him — after that dreadful row that started by his refusing to tell me his fraternity pass-word, you remember. Oh, Bookie, wasn't I a little idiot?

And Jack never forgets any of them and these

four, with our wedding-day and Christmas and New Year's and Easter and my birthday and off and on occasions, why they keep him busy. Somehow, his commemorating all our re-engagements as he does always seems a gentle reproof to me, but I don't let on.

But I really must go, or the wee Carter'll be in bed. I'll take her some of Jack's chocolate creams, too, I believe, poor *distrain* little human! She has evidently worked on Jack's sympathies through her friends, for he confesses he doesn't know her. He's a dear, softie old saint is my Jack!

Think of a man in his position bringing home whining little gutter kittens in his overcoat pocket! Three of them I've wrestled with, given the bottle to and seen die, in these five years!

I never could stand cats and neither could Jack, till his sister gave me Muff and of course Muffy couldn't be given away; but Jack can't stand to see anything suffer, and, I tell you, Bookie, he's had lots of it from me. I've been little better than a whining sick kitten to him more than once, dear, dear Jack!

All the women like Jack, and I'm glad of it.

I'm proud to have him popular — that is, general popularity. It's funny how these slight, thin-haired, near-sighted men like Jack always make good with women. I've noticed it and I suppose it's just because they're clever and don't seem to care a cent — and then they have ways.

I often wonder what I'd have done if I'd married that handsome noodle, my sister Mary's husband. (He asked me first. Then he sobered down and came to himself and got a far better wife, lucky man!) He suits her down to the ground and he's the pattern of a brother-in-law; but for daily fare, all that ponderous presentment of good looks as compared to my Jack —!!! But I must go!

Five O'clock next Morning — Daylight,
and I haven't closed my eyes.

Oh, my heart, my heart!

What shall I do? Where go?

Oh, Book-of-my-Broken-Heart! All night long I've lain here in cold storage staring out over the sea — all night but once when I just couldn't stand it a minute longer and I got up, threw on my cloak and started for the roof. I

had to get away from everything for a while, and I thought the stars might help, but it was no use. Everything seemed deceitful and catty. Even the sea was purring.

Besides, I soon found I wasn't alone. Several of the patients sleep up there. I knew it, but I'd forgotten. And in the alcove beyond the south tower two people were huddled close together, whispering. He looked half like Dr. Welborn, somehow, the man did, and something told me she was that smiling girl that works the static, that pretty one that colours so when she speaks; but I may be doing her injustice. If it was she, no doubt they'd come up here to consult about some case. The days are so full.

Isn't it strange how I can prate of casual things this way—and my heart breaking? And I find that the roof-steward sleeps inside, just as the doctors do. It's as if the medical profession were turning their patients out-of-doors and then getting into their beds.

Any old talk, dear Book, about any old thing—just to keep from thinking. Oh, oh, oh!!! If only I could wake and find it all a dream!

She hadn't gone to bed, the little Carter. I saw her — yes, I saw her — looking like a saint out of Heaven, sitting there with her light turned low — and, oh, dear heart of me, how can I tell it!

I had already given her the flowers and the chocolates when she turned up her light, and there lay at her elbow a letter addressed to her in *my Jack's writing* — unequivocally his — and on the same stationery he uses to me — and the envelope torn wide open lying there before me.

And, as to my one little box of chocolates, why, she had stacks of empty boxes exactly like it, from the same New York house, and all. Of course, this doesn't prove anything, and yet, one would be a fool not to ——

Oh, well! What's the dif'! But isn't it awful!

I mean what I say. I really don't care, if he wants to start this sort of thing — but what does he want with a crazy woman?

What do you think she said when I gave her the *bonbons*?

“Oh, how candied of you!” She smiled the

words out, and then, knitting her brows and looking troubled, she added: "But why didn't you telegraph them to our foreign missions? We feed our heathen too much meat." Then, with another smile which was like the opening of the heavens, she piped: "Do you tango?"

Oh, I don't know what I answered. I probably assured her that that was what had brought me to this, tango and bunny-hug and the rest of it — which isn't so very far from the truth, figuratively, at least.

But oh, my Jack, what does it all mean? Why did he go out of his way to assure me that he didn't know her? Such gratuitous lying! I hadn't asked him — and it isn't as if I were suspicious — or jealous!

Oh, if you could only advise me, dear little Book, but you are so still. Why don't you say something! Ah, yes, I can imagine you answering me: "Steady, now, Blessy, steady. Don't go off half-cocked. Remember the old days. Wait and see. No doubt there'll be some explanation."

As if there could be any explanation of perfectly simple English. "Don't know her" means

don't know her, and can't mean anything else. Letters and candy mean *letters and candy* — and can't be twisted to mean anything else.

No, I believe in looking a thing squarely in the face. I may be a fool, but I'm no coward. But he'll never hear me whimper. We'll see to that, you and I, dear Book.

But, right now — with me on the shelf — and away off here — for him to comfort me in my trouble — after all I've just been writing him — about the children and everything —

Oh, Jack, how could you!

There's one thing I'm glad of, though. He knows I haven't been moping while he's having a good time, leading a sort of double life. Yes, I know it's strong language — but we mustn't be afraid of the truth. Double means not single and he hasn't had an eye single to the woman of his life. I call that doubleness.

I wonder what he writes her — and if he tells her anything about me? It would be sort of awful if he did — and maybe worse if he didn't. Oh, dear!

But I must be writing him — and I must seem to be writing him just the same, which will come

hard. I'll never let on, though. My letters must be the same and yet not the same.

Writing to Jack has always been like putting my head on his bosom and resting. Now it'll be like — well, like sitting up across the room with manners and saying polite things.

But I can do it! I can do anything life requires of me. Of course, it'll be skirting the edge of a precipice — but I can even do that. There was a time when I sat up and behaved when he was around — and I reckon I can do it again.

If a certain propriety which I may not be able to keep out of my letter reminds him of our courting days, so much the better. Maybe that way remorse lies — for him.

What a pity I wrote that long letter yesterday, after mailing one a mile long. Of course, that won't do now. My head was on his bosom then, and it's all too sweet. But I must go and try to write him.

Two days later:

It's no use, Book-of-my-sore-heart — no use! I've begun a dozen letters to him, determined in

each one to guard and not to seem to guard my secret — but it won't go.

Oh, what should I do now, if I hadn't called you in again! — just in the nick of time, too. I must have had some occult sense of trouble looming, a sort of presentiment of evil, when I turned to you.

Three letters have come in from him since I've known, and as each one arrives, I vow I won't read it, and then I'm obliged to read it to see whether I'd be warranted in refusing to read it or not. That's only reasonable — and fair — and I'm going to be fair to Jack, even now — and tactful, too. You see if I don't!

A weak woman would grow hysterical in such a situation, but I never felt more calm in my life even while I hardly know what to do. Calmness has never been my strong point, either. Perhaps what I've needed is trouble, and God knows I'm in the thick of it, now. Maybe I'll come out of it a better woman, God helping me, and a stronger one.

I *have* cried over these last letters, but weeping doesn't count for weeping when no one sees you weep — and no one ever shall see me weep.

These last letters of his are all right, I suppose. There hasn't been one so far, surely, which I ought exactly to repudiate, and if there was, I wouldn't do it. What would I have left?

Of course, they read differently, in the new light. What three days ago would have seemed like a fine abandon in unreckoning love-making, sounds like cold-blooded perfidy — until I think it over. It isn't as bad as that; really, it isn't. You see, I'm not letting this thing run away with me. The truth is, his ardent letters have just become habit with Jack. He wouldn't know how to write me any other way, and I'm not ready to say I want him to, either. Cooling would be dreadful.

Of course, taking it critically, anything less than full sincerity in a husband is perfidious. I suppose there's no middle ground for a man, he being the aggressor. He is either god or devil to the woman who loves him. A woman is different. She is human, first and last, womanly faults balancing womanly virtues in the soft-bosomed creature who spends her life in loving and forgiving. That's why she's so much more approachable than man. Last night, lying

awake, I wished I'd married Joe Jeffries and gone in for motor cars and excitement, for then, although I'd have lost the man I loved, I'd have kept my *ideal*. Jack would have represented perfection to me to the end of time. Now, I've lost my ideal and have only half got Jack and he isn't the same Jack. But it's too late now.

And all this silly talk isn't answering his letters — and I left off in my last letter right in the midst of things on the roof — the Butte had just grabbed up those yellow roses and rolled away in tears — and he'll be waiting to hear the rest. Of course, I've got to seem to keep on where I left off, and it's the hardest job I ever tackled.

I suppose I could just send it along — that saccharine effusion of night before last — and it would keep him off the scent till I get my bearings. But if I do, I'll have to *stitch* it along without reading it over. It's fairly cloying in its sweetness — and strange to say, I never tasted the honey at all when I wrote it.

Imagine his getting such a letter of faith and affection just as he is licking a postage-stamp to put on a letter to little Hell-hounds. I be-

lieve that's what I'll call her after this. No, I take that back. It's rough. She looks like an angel, but I tell you she won't do — even if she is half crazy. She looks too good to be true — and she is.

I've half a mind to send that letter of mine along to Jack — and let it go for what it's worth. He's my husband *anyhow* and it's an *honest letter* — and I don't care! It was written in all sincerity, if it is mailed in despair.

And even if I succeeded in writing one just to my taste now, he might notice something wrong — and he says he's caught a bad cold and I'm worried to death about him, as it is.

The truth is, Jack needs me. He never knows what thickness of wool he's wearing. I just look at the thermometer outside the window and lay out his things for him, and on they go without a question. Men are such babies. They need mothering more than they need wifing — almost.

Oh, Jack! How am I going to stand this! He seems so far away — and I miss his nearness. I wouldn't think God would let a thing like this come to a person like me. I know I'm trivial

and thoughtless — but even my Latin teacher used to say I was a good little thing.

And this nonsense on the roof here is the nearest I've ever come to lying — and I've told Jack every bit of it.

Maybe if I send this letter along, he'll suddenly realise that I'm a transparent, loving little goose — and he's a cloudy deceiver.

Anyhow, things can't be much worse than they are now — so here goes. I'll ring for the corridor-patrol and send it down to be mailed. And then maybe I can get some good sleep.

THE SACCHARINE LETTER

(Mail-time came, dear Jack, so I rushed off what I'd written and now, while it's all fresh in my mind, I'll go ahead.)

We were —— ?

Oh, yes, I remember. The Butte had just found my yellow roses. Well, of course, it was all funny, in a way, although a bit too much like horse-play for my conservative taste. Still, nobody, seeing the catastrophe of the Canadian's elimination, could say it wasn't killingly funny;

and yet, I, knowing the full humorous inwardness of it, laughed not at all. One needs perspective for comedy. The flute upon my bosom weighed a ton. The guilt on my conscience had buried my sense of humour fathoms deep.

When I ventured to lift my head a little to discover if the curl was in sight, I saw only a pile of upset bedding. No glint of gold, at once to comfort and affright me. So I lay back, limp-spirited and weary, and waited; but the roofers were slow to disperse and when finally I ventured to rise, it was twilight and a crescent moon mocked me with her silver horns while I strolled across the roof, restored the flute as I had taken it, dropping it with my veil in the vicinity of the comedy cot, recovering the veil and tripping nervously away, my heart overflowing with gratitude to Almighty God to be freed of this witness.

Just supposing the Butte had yelled for her flute as soon as she waked — as she most certainly would have done but for the diversion of the roses! Where would I have been? Realising my narrow escape, you may know how I felt, Jack, when hearing steps behind me just as

I reached the door, I glanced back to see my poor victim, roses and all, scurrying back for her forgotten treasure.

Did I wait to see her find it? Not I, beloved One! The flute episode instantly became ancient history in the face of a new menace. What about my little curl? Would she find it — and flourish it before the roof? I tell you, Jack, a yellow peril no bigger than a candle-flame threatened to fire my mine; and where would any of us have been after the explosion? And this it was, this dread, that sent your poor wife with all speed to her room.

Never again, Jack!

However, nothing happened at supper. I went down smiling in sheer despair, selected a seat where a mirror afforded me a reflection of comers and goers — played with my *vinaigrette* and my fan — and got my wind.

It isn't a bad manœuvre, Jack, when the enemy is uncertain, this mirror business; and you can imagine how thrilled I was when, almost immediately after I took my seat, my point of vantage gave me the Butte striding in majestically, arrayed in canary satin with a great

corsage of yellow roses. She had even substituted yellow for the red ribbon upon her hair. But the gold of her costume was as nothing to the radiance of her beaming face.

Of course, I had to see more of the play, and so, after supper, I drifted with the crowd into the parlour, instead of dashing back to my room to be confronted by my conscience and no end of mental bugaboos.

Poor Butte! And poor old Blessy! Yes, I did pity myself, for it seemed to me I was being sent all the way to hell for insufficient cause. It was hard on us both, although I have never seen the Butte look half so happy, and I assure you the institutional smile wasn't in it with my beaming face.

But before we go any further, Jack, let me tell you about those roses. It was the little joker who brought them, and the way of it was this: You see, he likes to come and stand and talk to me and I've grown rather to esteem him. He isn't half bad, the little joke-man. I tell you, it takes grit for a man who has lost a big job through typhoid fever to take care of himself through his convalescence by industry, and to do

it with merriment, and that's what that little man is accomplishing.

Well, to go back to the roses, it was this way: One day, he startled me by calmly remarking that he had just made ten dollars off my head, and before I could question him, he went on to repeat the refrain of a certain poem inspired by same (head) — a refrain which ran like this:

“And the yellow roses hid them in her hair, golden hair,
For the gold of yellow roses is her hair!”

Whereupon I denied the colour, of course, contending that yellow hair was no more true yellow than was red hair red, these tints being merely approximations; but he kept on insisting until finally he said that, with my permission, he would send me half the price of the poem in golden roses if I would forfeit a curl to him if he proved right, which, of course, I promptly agreed to do. See?

So I understood instantly when I saw him lay the roses on the foot of the cot where I was supposed to be sleeping — and it was just like him to do it impersonally and disappear, and not hang around for thanks. They did match, Dear. I'll tell you about that presently.

And now, of course, he has reason to believe on evidence that I conspicuously gave his roses away. I saw him see me when we came out from supper — and the worst of it is I may never explain.

Well, when I got into the parlour, who do you suppose came rushing up to me most effusively? Who but the Butte, herself, a great giant canary! If you'd seen her, you'd never call me your little canary again. She looked more Amazonian, more Brobdingnagian than ever. But she's a nice woman, Dear, though as crazy as a loon, as you'll see presently, and your wife is utterly no good.

She had come, she said, "to tell me of her joy," and why do you suppose? Because, forsooth, I was *the only person in this place who had been kind to her!*

Ye gods! Talk about coals of fire! Your wife's pate is charcoal. It is true, I had sympathised with her inwardly, and in the all-night flute business,—she's better of that, now—I never let on to any one here how it kept me awake. But I've neglected her utterly, which was mean, and everybody else hating her for

nothing. Well, maybe she felt my latent sympathy, for here she stood looking trustfully into my eyes and trying to tell me "what those yellow roses meant to her."

Of course, knowing the truth about the roses, this frightened me a little. It was so crazy! Did you ever feel your knees suddenly give way? Really, between fear and remorse, I felt as ill as if I'd been caught stealing—a sense of my crime and of never-being-able-to-explain overwhelming me. For a second even speech deserted me, but before I knew what I should say or do, that inner something-or-other which comes to our rescue when life is altogether too hard, had spoken for me, and in a tone quite reassuring, I heard it say, "Do tell me about it!"

And then, affrighted and self-accusing, before she had a chance to tell me anything, I hastened to assure her of several perfectly obvious things, the only one that I clearly recall being that *I was not half so good as I looked*. You see, I was on a blind search for some sort of sincerity and the devious ways of deceit were really new to me. If I stumbled, is there any wonder?

Then, to make matters worse, while she stood

there, I happened to see the little joke-man, donor of the roses and unconscious conspirator with me in this pathetic comedy, watching us from behind the palms, and I just couldn't stand it, so I whispered: "Suppose we go up to my room and have a little talk."

I felt as if I were taking my life in my hands when I said it, too, for really, she seemed utterly crazy as she stood there hugging those roses; but I said to myself, "If she murders you and flings you out of the window into the sea, it's good enough for you, Blessy Heminway! And she's the one to do it, too!"

However, we were both laughing when we went up, and when I had turned on all the lights and given her my best chair and laid your last box of chocolates upon her lap, her delight gave me full reward, and really, sitting there in her pretty clothes, she seemed less dangerous.

Then, to make good with myself by one genuine act, I showed her your picture and *told her who you were!* Yes, I did, really, and she promised never to tell and she will not. I'm sure of it.

She was very sweet about it all — said she

was really glad to know I was married because I would better understand. Then she confided that she had a lover "a stunnin' fellow — *the* very handsomest!" And that scared me to death again and made me think of the flute-playing and what the nurse had said which I hadn't believed but couldn't quite forget — that the Brigand was her fiancé, you remember — and he vowing he didn't know her — and I wished we were back in the parlour, alive.

Poor dear! Somehow, it almost broke my heart to see her sitting there hugging my roses and speaking of love. Of course, I had no idea what the connection could be, in her mind, between the imagined lover and the incidental, accidental roses, but I could wait and be kind. I could have done that, even if there hadn't been an indescribable poignant note of feminine tenderness in her voice, while she offered me what to her was her utmost confidence.

And, Jack, her name is Daisy, not only Daisy, but Daisy Butterfield — was ever name more feminine? — and she sprang upon her chair when my ball of knitting-silk rolled across the floor, and she thinks woman suffrage "positively

immodest." So she confided while she devoured your chocolates like a school-girl. Thus, with her otherwise masculine proportions, is the feminine balance kept true.

And, by the way, she says this is her third engagement, both the others having been broken by mine disasters; and she blushingly confided that her love for this third man, after romance had seemed gone forever out of her life, "is as ardent as a young girl's," which was pathetically naïve. By the way, she's only twenty-nine, ten years less than my guess, but brain fever followed by nerve wreckage has no doubt aged her. However, as she sat there, feminized by dainty clothes and her mood, she didn't look twenty-five, and I told her so, too. It isn't often possible to pay her a compliment, poor soul.

"And to think he's coming!"

Her ejaculation was apropos of nothing, but she bent her lips to the roses as she threw it out, and I looked around swiftly to make sure there was nothing for me to stumble against, in case I should suddenly have to run. But her voice was even and reassuring as she went on:

"He always sends these Persian roses ahead,

to prepare me. It's the symbol of our mine, 'The Golden Rose.' "

Then, presently, she added:

"But what gets me is how he managed to get 'em to me, away up there on the roof! And to my very cot! Ain't it *too* romantic! I was tempted to quiz Beauregard Davis, and then I wouldn't. I'd rather make believe he just wafted 'em to me. He's all for romance. I've got his roses, an' that's all I care for." And bending, she pressed the top roses of her corsage against her cheek, tenderly, caressingly.

What could I say to her? After an absurd pause, saved only by the chocolate creams, what I really did say was:

"When do you expect him?"

"Any minute," she chuckled, "just any minute! I almost hesitated to come up with you, for fear I'd miss him, so I must be goin'."

And with a friendly glance at your photograph as she rose, she added,

"Yours is real nice lookin', awful toney but not the sort I'd suspect you of, hardly. I'd look for yours to have on goggles and a bear robe and never to get out of his automobile."

"He has the glasses and the fur coat," I laughed, "and the car, too, but he gets out once in a while to have his picture taken." At which she rippled merrily and started off.

"So has mine!" she called back. "He's got three and 'lots of pictures taken in 'em. Oh, he's great!"

Then, turning, she rushed up to me, drew the locket from her neck and showed me, what do you suppose? *The Brigand's picture, as I'm alive!*

And now she really was gone, a tall streak of golden happiness, poor, poor dear! I was so weak for a moment that I was frightened. Isn't it awful! But her visit, tragic as it was, has done me good. It has given me insight. She's a true, unaffected woman, crazy, of course, but a serious woman and good and loving — and I'm a mercurial little fraud. But I'm going to be better. Wouldn't it be great if she really had a lover and he should happen along in a day or so — or if she were to die to-night, say, in all her golden glory, before she has to realise things!

She says he's to be allowed to come when the doctor says so, and surely her improved ap-

pearance in the parlour last night, in all her radiance and roses, ought to go a long way, that is, assuming that she knows what she's talking about at all.

"And things are not what they seem." You knew a lot, Mr. Longfellow. I suppose the poets do know. Maybe they really see with their poet-eyes things too fine for our vision. That poor thing's thanking me for being good to her breaks me up terribly. I wouldn't be surprised if I get religion before I'm done with it. You know remorse is the first symptom. Now I realise something of the comfort our poor darkies get out of their mourners' benches. I'm figuratively on one, this minute.

By the way, I sent that yellow curl to the kindly joke-man, with a note of thanks for the flowers "which through an unavoidable mistake, did not reach me," and I also intimated that I should trust to his good taste not to refer to them, *to anybody*. And did I tell you that Beauregard Davis brought the lost curl to me that same night, saying he had found it on the roof and he "thought maybe I'd as lief not have it hung up in the 'lost-and-found cabinet' in

the rotunda"? It was one of those thirty-cent ones which always seemed to amuse you so, but in the circumstances, I thought it only fair to value it at a dollar which I cheerfully did, notwithstanding the posted notices against tipping. I am a weak creature, full of brave resolves which melt at the turn of a hair.

I've hardly had a glimpse of the Brigand for days, but yesterday I saw him hanging over the roller chair of Gipsy Fournette, the prima donna in the Houris company, you remember. She goes by the name of Bradford here, but I knew her on sight. So would any New Yorker. It seems she's been here, in retirement, for nearly a year and is just emerging. Her hair is even yellower than mine and her cheeks far redder. She looks more like a hurrah than a houri.

I felt sorry to see that nearly seven feet of artless Success bending over this frail sister. Such a big moth and such a little candle! Although I've never seen him alone or had a moment's *tête-à-tête* with him, he has followed me with his eye ever since that first day; and when he knows I'm within hearing, he talks of "early advantages," and one day he said that

the highest ambition of his life was to marry a woman much too good for him. "If I married a saint," and he glanced at me when he said it, "if I married a saint, I'd make money enough to build a cathedral around her."

He can't talk five minutes without bringing in money, one way or another. And, by the way, he is known as Col. Copperthwaite. When I heard it, I thought, "Why, of course. How could he have been named anything else, or rank otherwise than as a rank brevet colonel of the Pacific slope!"

Well, that evening, after his delivery as to marrying a saint, he asked me what I thought of his ambition, assuming, you see, that I had "taken notice."

"I think you must have had a good mother," I answered sincerely.

"How did you know?" he beamed, and then he added sadly, "Yes, she was a saint, but she had no cathedral."

There was something beautiful in his face as he said that! There is much that seems fine about the man, and he is so refreshing, after our academic types. Even his going from one re-

ligion to another proves him a fearless seeker after truth, don't you think?

And I'm quite sure he is artless about women. See how he idealises me, for instance, just because I'm little and innocent-looking!

An hour later.

I'd been ordered an egg phosphate at nine, and it came, on time, via blue livery, cap and smile, as usual, and I've taken it down manfully and feel delightfully lifted. It was prescribed for soothing and sleep, I believe, but I suppose a good and biddable medicine just does whatever trick is required of it. I needed a fillip and stamina, and I've got it, and I feel as if I could write all night. I've got a good-and-tight boudoir cap over my hair, so I'm not afraid of the bats.

No more dates, Beloved, none but the home-going which I love to realise — four days hence — when I go ditto (hence, tra, la!) My heart is full of song at the thought. But I'm all in a tangle yet and must extricate myself, for everybody's sake — for my own dignity's and yours — and nations yet to come, as I love to repeat.

Isn't it great to be innocent, though? Innocent of evil intention, I mean. I try to take courage in that thought, and recall Socrates, "Would you have me die guilty?"

I've been a fool, and it has led me through devious motions of knavery, but God knows my heart. We are all innocent, every one of us, but most of all, the crazy, kindly Butte and the inflated but ingenuous Brigand. His highest ambition is to be a gentleman. It's inside him and has only to work its way out. I'm a perfect lady on my giddy outsides, but inwardly I'm a ravening wolf, whatever ravening is — or maybe it's a wolf in sheep's clothing that I am — an evil force warned against in Holy Writ.

If I've hurt anybody's feelings here, it's the Brigand's, and not by a thing but consistent snubbing. I've never even bowed to him unless I had to. Somehow I've been nervous lest he'd embarrass me by doing something spectacular. He often looks as if he'd fall on his knees and clap his hand to his heart if I looked his way. Others have noticed it, too — not in exactly these words, maybe. But now I begin to think perhaps I've been mistaken.

He is just a case of sounding brass and he recognises me as a tinkling cymbal and he thinks we are in the same class. He is really a noisy Westerner with the breadth of the plains and the ruggedness of the Rockies expressed in a breezy personality, and, while he had lived all over the world in spots and feels himself ultra-cosmopolitan, he is quite outside the culture currents, even brass-bound and nickel-plated, if you will, but plated on standard copper, like the old Sheffield plate, good wearing stuff.

Children and dogs go to him on sight and one of his favourite roof stunts is feeding the birds on his shoulders and they do come and seem unafraid. I forget just where he hails from, originally. Of course, he has mentioned it. He mentions everything. Really, I can't think of any subject upon which he has not spoken unless it is the Butte. Of her he says not a word, although he must know of her delusion. And I've seen him regard her receding figure with a strange tenderness which seems like infinite pity. It would be an embarrassment to almost any man to be pursued by a neurotic woman who believes herself his fiancée, and, of

course, reticence is his only rôle. It shows that he can be silent when he will, all the same.

He's been in the Orient a great deal and has a lot of curious Eastern things, they say, but he's Western-American, and will be to the end of time, even if he should take up his abode in the Far East and practise his Buddhism in Mandarin robes or pajamas.

And he thinks me a saint, and it breaks my heart. Never again, Jack! I couldn't stand for this honest ruffian to discover my frivolity and yet—see how one sin leads to another! I'm bent upon deceiving just one more time. Letting him know about you is nothing, except, of course, that I want him always to believe it was a misunderstanding of which I was unconscious. You know it was, at first.

Would it be fair to ask God to help me out, do you think? I used to bring God into all my misbehaviours, and He did help me, because I was little. Now I'm grown up, but I'm very little yet. I'm going to try Him. He can only turn me down, and I don't believe He will, not God!

You see, He made me, mischief and all, and

He must understand His own job. I've prayed a lot here, Jack. I've had so much time in the open, facing the heavens — and the blue sky, the faint stars and drifting mists and all the wonder of space — and the long silences —

One gets a clear perspective of more than just scenery from the roof at Seafair. It has shown me so much — our lives at home, yours and mine, since the very beginning, dear, *dear* Jack!

A short divorce is a wholesome thing, once in a while, I'm sure; not that I ever want another, but this will bear fruit of joy. I've been lots and lots to blame for things, but I won't grovel, at this distance.

I will say, though, that you are the one who is justly entitled to this nervous prostration and all the indulgences it is affording. I fear I've been a mollusc, but I've seen myself in time — seen my own reflections in the crystalline waters of your devotion. Excuse my faulty metaphor. A mollusc would have to hump herself to get into position to see her own reflection — but I can't write this over, and besides, I want that in about "the crystalline waters of your devotion."

I'd never get that off again so well, and I do mean it.

When I get home, you'll be trimming around my temperament again, before you know it. Don't do it, Dear. Trim the temperament. It needs it. Oh, I'm going to be sweetest ever, after this, see if I don't!

And be sure to bring ——

No, don't bring anything. There'll be so many things to take away. Yes, fetch along all the empty valises and things — and my other hat-box.

P. S.

I've decided not to bother the Lord about it. I'm going to brace up and be a woman and handle this thing myself. I'm not a squealer. If I'd prayed going in, I might pray to get out. Of course, I *am praying*, but it's the prayer of the jester, "God be merciful to me, a fool!" so do I abase myself.

I'm going down to the dining-room to meet people and do my reverent best to harmonise things. This will probably be my last to you —

unless you postpone your coming again, which, for gracious' sake, don't — and I'm so afraid I'm forgetting something —

Oh, yes, your cheque-book, Jack, dear. Be sure to fetch it along. I went to the antiquity-shop just one more time — and it's a secret till your birthday — but it's a dream!!! And now, adieu. If you know how, do send up a prayer for your little partner. Oh, if you could waft me vibrations of success! I'd do almost anything to tranquillise things here. I'd gladly hoodoo these good Christian people into believing I'm not a pagan, if I could. Oh, for some magic, some magic!

Your lonely, penitent, crazy but sympathy-needing and ever devoted

BLESSY.

Written in Diary:

Well, it's gone, dear Bookie — an hour ago — and maybe it's just as well. I sent it because I was desperate and didn't know what else to do, and now, oh, my heart! Another letter from him, no, just a short note — and he's ill — in bed with a "bad cold," which means he's down with

pneumonia or incipient tuberculosis or God knows what!

It's a mercy that I restrained myself and didn't upbraid him — and maybe have his sister Laura reading the letter to him, if he isn't too ill to be read to. I'd almost rather know Jack was unfaithful than for anybody to think I thought so, especially his own people, confound 'em! I couldn't stand that. I can't stand any of it, for that matter, but what is one to do — when the worst comes?

Standing a thing is just not dying, I suppose. But with Jack first estranged and now ill, maybe dying — if anything else happens — ? But, of course, nothing else could happen, nothing of consequence. If the house burned down and Laura eloped with the chauffeur and the law-firm of Oglesby and Heminway went under, and Jack came along, well and smiling and all this horror were wiped out, I'd call it a red letter day for us. That's the kind of blind devotion poor Jack is treading under foot.

Dear, dear! Here comes my dinner tray, and after that, I've got a date in the treatment room, "hot dip and cold spray," followed by salt

rub by a fresh masseuse, I suppose. I tell you, Book-of-my-tedious-hours, one has to hustle to keep up with this rest routine.

But I must go, for "food taken at a temperature either far above or below that of the digestive organs is detrimental to the strong and occasionally fatal to the weak." You see, I unconsciously memorise choice bits of the circulating literature of this publishing firm. I've been thinking that if worse came to worst, I might perhaps get a job as editor of some of their pamphlets and things.

You are a great comfort to me now, dear Book. I thought I'd tell you so. It seems to bring you nearer, just telling you. You see, you are all I have now. If anything were to happen here, now, anything awful, I couldn't write Jack, for he's either estranged or ill, or both—or maybe on his way here, and with a divided mind. I suppose the little Carter is expecting him, too, confound her!

Two hours later.

Oh, what shall I do? What *shall* I do? A

note from that sister-in-law of mine, who never writes to me if she can help it, and she says not to worry, but "Jack has a slight cold on his chest" and asks her to let me know it isn't serious, all of which means, of course, that it's as bad as can be and they are getting ready to break the news to me — to prepare me for the worst. She says Jack will probably be quite well before I get her letter, and starting to me. Of course, I know what that means. It means I'm not to rush home and take care of my poor sick husband, and nobody knows what to do for Jack but me. He says so himself.

I'm half tempted to just get up and go home — and then, like as not by the time I'd get to New York, he'd be either dead or here — and I suppose that's just what he and little Hell-hounds are scheming for. Yes, I will call her that, too! I didn't name her. She named herself, and when I say it, it's a quotation: "Hell-hounds!" Fine language, that, for a lady!

Fleas and bats and brigands and somnambulists and now, hell-hounds! I tell you, little Book, this rest cure is great! Now I know what

"the survival of the fittest" really means. It means that if I come through this alive, I'll be fit for anything!

Next morning.

My dear Husband:

I think I am going mad and I know I'm going to die; and before delirium sets in, I must write you. I'd like to go out of life writing to you. I may not keep sane long enough to finish this letter, but if I don't and they find me raving or dying, you'll know that I went out thinking of you.

I haven't slept a wink all night — not a wink. I saw a bat fly under my room and I didn't even cover my head. I kept hoping he would come and nestle in my hair and claw me to death, but although he would sometimes swoop down nearly to touching, he finally flapped harmlessly out of the window into the night. Then a thunder shower came up and I lay still and prayed God to strike me dead, and He wouldn't. He didn't pay the slightest attention to me. I haven't eaten any breakfast and I'm not going to eat any dinner or supper or anything more, if I can help it, so that I may get off your hands with as little trouble as possible.

My heart is broken and so, what's the use? I've found out everything, Jack, and I don't blame you. Things are as they are. A married man is either immune when it comes to other women, or he isn't. Many are not, but a few are, or I supposed they were, but maybe I've been mistaken. I thought you were until — until I found out, three days ago. And since then, I've been trying to steady myself and get my bearings.

That last letter which you'll have some time before this reaches you, was written before I knew, of course. I knew before I sent it, but I was too heart-sick to write another — and so I just let it go. Nothing mattered then.

As I've just said, I don't reproach you. A man is true or untrue, and when he was true yesterday and is untrue to-day, it doesn't do any good to sigh for yesterday.

And if he is faithful for five years and then begins to deceive, it seems fair to suppose he is facing round for a five years' retreat. Like the king of France, having marched up the hill, he marches down again — a royal masculine performance.

I wouldn't mind, Jack, if I could stand it, but I can't. Of course, I don't know why you sent me here, under her very nose, and then were not satisfied until you had fairly pushed me into her presence, unless this was your way of letting me know how things are. But the method doesn't matter. I know now, and I am so ill and you are so ill —

A perfectly absurd thing has just this moment happened. My mail-bag brought me no letter from you, but out of it dropped into my hand one for *her* in your handwriting. Isn't there some old proverb about a man living a double life needing to employ two kinds of stationery, and to keep them apart? If there isn't, there ought to be.

Of course, I excuse your writing me on that blue office paper with the imprint of the firm upon the envelopes, but I'd hardly think you'd offer this to — well, to a lady with whom your relations were less informal, so to speak.

No doubt it was an accident, my getting her letter, and she may have one intended for me and be chuckling or turning pale over its contents now, but that wouldn't worry me in the least.

Some of your letters to your wife might be good medicine for her — especially the one which describes her as a friend's friend whom you do not personally know.

I can't send your letter over to her immediately without exciting curiosity, but the first time I go down to the retunda — one has to dress to go there — I'll drop it with others into the box, and it will reach her in due course. I hope you won't mind the delay. If I should hand it to one of these nurse patrols, with instructions to drop it into the box, the chances are she would read the address and decide to deliver it in person, and there'd be explanations. The nurses seize any excuse to go into her suite, just to look at her and see her clothes.

She had on a Paquin model the first time I called and a Doeuillet the last time — you see, I know clothes. And I don't have to notice other women's gowns. My mind photographs them for me and I look them over at my leisure.

She dresses like a princess, of course you know, although she wears no jewels — which also, of course you know, and which is in excellent taste in a place like this.

But I began this letter in quite another mood than this, Jack, and the comedy of my intercepting your mail jolted me out of things for the moment. And now a sharp pain in my heart is jolting me back. You know my only escape from trouble is in frivolity. But all this is so trivial in the face of the tragedy which confronts me.

I began by telling you I was going to die — and I am. When I wrote that, I'd just had a letter from Laura saying you were ill and couldn't write, and it seemed a question as to which of us would go first. Now, I find you to be actively alive — and the situation is much simplified.

I shall be the one to die and you will have your desire. If you had been the one to go, I'd have had nothing, so this is best. Oh, yes, I know what I am saying. You see, my heart, while sound enough, has never been very strong and I've always realised that this sort of thing would kill me.

Anything *with* you, Jack — poverty, sickness, disgrace even — But this —

Only three days I've known it and my heart hurts all the time and I can't draw a deep

breath without catching. At first it would hurt only when I dwelt on things or cried too hard; then, when the nightmarishness of it all passed and the fact, just the Awful Fact, lay like a leaden weight within me — a resident anguish, at home within my broken heart — the dull sodden pain settled down with it, and it never goes. I've got it now, just the blind ache. When any new grief comes, or phase — like your getting Laura to write me for you and your writing the Carter yourself, something quick and sharp happens, as if a bladed corkscrew gave just one twist in my heart — then the old ache, a comparative relief, comes.

You know my grandmother died on being roused from her sleep by a cry of "Yankees!" in New Orleans during the war, and father went suddenly, too, and it's a good way to go.

And so, now, before things go too far with me, I want to tell you, Jack, that while all this is a mystery which I don't even try to understand, I must put it aside long enough to tell you how happy I have been these blissful five years, for surely five years of heaven ought to outweigh the eternity of hell of these three days.

I am sure no other woman has been quite so blessed as I; no living husband has ever been so dear to any other wife, as you have to me — so patient, so forgiving, so generous, so ever-remembering of me, so forgetful of self, so able, so resourceful, so adaptable, so competent.

Don't think that I fail to realise how you've even mothered me in my peevish days, as if I'd been a sick baby — and you've been a very prince of lovers all the time that your care and protection as a husband of faculty have surrounded and pillowed me. When I've giddily referred to your "genius for husbandry," I meant it to its farthest reach, Dear, and in all seriousness.

You've humoured me to my hurt sometimes and to your own undoing — and through it all, with no self-consciousness or self-righteousness or self anything, you've set me a standard of nobility. You've been my model of all that is strong and gentle and kind.

Everything you've been to me, Jack — knight, lover, chum, comrade, husband — yes, you've even been my baby, when you've been sick. And now I see why it's best that we've had no other.

A child now would complicate things dreadfully.

As it is, I'll slip away — and this anguish will be over. Not that I am going by choice. It's this pain — and the catching — and the wide-awake-all-nights and the sense of letting go! It's this knowledge of approaching death which in a way gives you back to me, just for this little while. And for this brief space you shall be all mine. I shan't mail this letter to you, or any others I may write in the little time left us. They'll be here when I go — and you'll understand.

I don't want to put you on the defensive and go in for recriminations or anything sad. There's nothing to be said. It isn't as if I were accepting wretchedness on circumstantial evidence. You see, I have documentary proof in my pocket, this minute, but I care so little for such as that that I shall pass it along as soon as I can. Why should I want to prove things that are? It's bad enough to know them.

Another reason I don't want to write you about it now is that I can't spare one of your caressing letters while I'm so ill. Even if I

were going to get better, I'd say love me now and do everything sweet for me till I'm well, and then we'll see what to do. And of course now I need love still more.

Two Hours Later:

After Lunch.

My dear Husband:

God knows what is happening! Oh, if only you were here! My little suite is a bower of roses, about a car-load — brides' roses, mainly, and maidenhair ferns and orchids — hundreds of orchids — and white carnations and about a mile of Bermuda lilies! This bath-tub is full of flowers again. And that isn't the worst. There's a white satin box of fresh orange flowers, packed in cotton.

At first, I was sure it was a mistake, but I've scanned the address and its unequivocal, "Seafair Rest Cure, Seafair, Va., Suite 99, Hemingway," so what could I say? It took two porters and a trained nurse half an hour to fetch them in — three elevator loads. Of course, seeing I was in for it, I put on my casual expression and directed them where to place them, quite as if it were an ordinary occurrence. *I had to.*

But I'm in some deadly trouble, Jack. Suppose it's the Brigand! Not that, of course, and yet *somebody* is expecting me to marry him! If it were our wedding anniversary, I'd almost suspect you if things were not as they are with you, though I'd know your mind had given way under the strain I've put you to—or else you'd “struck it rich.” There are hundreds of dollars' worth of flowers, yes, thousands, maybe.

Later — God knows the hour, I don't.

I've been around looking at the flowers again. *Everything* is full of them. Even the mantel is heaped with green coils, miles of smilax rope, and all around the walls open boxes of roses make a dado, meeting the floor; and the air is so suffocating with the musky smell of the Easter lilies that I came near fainting in leaning over them to decipher a card; but when I did finally make it out, the words “Cathedral Altar,” brought me to, more quickly than smelling-salts.

My heart seemed to stop. Strange to say, though, the exigency of things stimulated me. It wasn't at all like my sorrow-pain — and it isn't now, although I am frightened to death and

something inside me keeps shrieking "Cathedral altar!" in the voice of the Brigand. Really, it sounds like — could it be — can it be he? And all this squanderous spending of money is fearfully like his talk.

If it is, he's crazy — and this is an insane asylum. Maybe I'm crazy. They never know themselves. I was just about to shriek for help, when I stumbled over a little box tied with a white ribbon. I don't know how I got it open, my hands shook so, but before I knew it, I was gazing as one dazed at an absurd bit of statuary, done in white paste — sugar, maybe — a miniature bride standing in a miniature cathedral, awaiting her man at the altar and the whole glistening with flakes of isinglass or something.

I tell you, Jack, if the card made me suspicious, this convinced me.

"Sure as you're born, Blessy Heminway," I gasped, "it's the Brigand. You've got a maniac on your hands!"

And with that, feeling so helpless and alone, and you, my only stay on earth, so far, far, far away, I broke down utterly and cried as children cry, and I was afraid somebody would hear

me, and a blue-dressed nurse would be coming in with a valerian cocktail, an attentive way they have here when there's too much emotional noise in a room, so they say.

So I went to my seaward window and let the wind blow over me, and got quiet, but I didn't know what to do, where to go. The roof would mean complications, and there was something funereal in this roomful of flowers. I felt I must get out, so I rang and ordered a carriage at four, for the afternoon. Then, seeing that I had time to spare, I lay down in the breeze, and covered my head, hoping to get a wink of sleep, and I must have slept over an hour when I was lifted to my feet by a sharp rap at the door.

The carriage was waiting.

I seem to rally to exigency, thanks be, and after two or three gasps and a hard swallow, I was able to say into the crack of the door which, in sheer bravado, I cautiously opened that far:

"I am sorry not to have recalled my order in time, but I've changed it till to-morrow — same hour, please."

The evenness of my own voice reassured me, and when I thought over what I had said, I felt

that I could hardly have done better, as, if they had sniffed a sensation in this flower business, they'd see that I counted on being here to-morrow, anyway.

Then I went to the mirror and looked at myself, and my face frightened me. It was pinched and green and red-spotted and awful. So I went to the bath-room and bathed it in hot and cold water and came back and rubbed in cold cream and rubbed it out again, over and over, for I don't know how long. I'd probably be standing there yet, rubbing in cold cream, if I hadn't been startled out of myself by a voice at the door softly whispering, "Please let me in. It's only me, Daisy Butterfield," that it took me a moment to realise in this impersonation of meekness the incongruous personality of the Butte.

Of course, I couldn't let her in, but I didn't have to. If Daisy Butterfield had timidly pled for admittance, the Butte of Montana, finding the door "on the latch," strode in with Amazonian tread, blurting her hearty apology:

"Don't mind me. I just had to come in.

I've got *great news!*" And she flourished an open letter in my face. "He's on the way, nearly here — called to New York unexpectedly — and he says I've got to marry him to-night! Do you hear? *To-night!* And he ain't a man to oppose, either! I wouldn't have one that was! And that ain't all!"

She was standing in the middle of the room and, turning around, she waved her long arm, taking in the whole place:

"It's these flowers that brought me here. Of course, everybody's talking. They think you're going to be married, but, you see, I know better, an' so —"

Coming quite up to me, she laid her hand upon my arm and looking me squarely in the face, she demanded:

"Do you know whose flowers these are, Mis' Heminway?"

Then, seeing that I hesitated, she went on:

"Because, you know, they are weddin' flowers. 'How did I find out?' Why, everybody knows it. It's the giggle of the roof! And what's more, they come from Thorler's in New York. I

didn't hear that. I saw some of the boxes and I'd know a Thorler flower-box from here to the sand-sopper's beach. I've had too many!"

Then hesitating to gain breath, she changed her tone:

"Of course, Mis' Heminway, you know my name's Butterfield, not Buttinsky, and I don't want to *butt in* on any of your private affairs, but —— Why don't you say somethin', dear little lady? I'm as good as a whole clam-bed for secrecy, so don't be afraid to tell me *anything*. And look at me! Fairly glorified with joy and my Beloved's roses, an' him on the way — and this precious letter — and —— Honey, darling innocent little lady-baby, *why don't you say somethin'?* You know what I think, don't you?" And, in a great Ellen Terry whisper she blurted: "They're mine! That's whose roses they are!"

Of course, it was stupid of me, but until she came out with this, I never suspected what she was driving at. My submerged mind, diving on a still hunt for a clue to the mystery, could not take in any other thought than that she was vaguely wondering, as I had done, which of the

fool men around, believing me un-
lost his head.

But here was light. Not clear light, surely, for I knew she was crazy — on this one subject if on no other — but any light was better than the darkness in which I had been groping.

I knew whose yellow roses she was cherishing — her somnambulistic pursuit of the Brigand was too recent to forget, and yet — here was coherence, surely, and freely brandished documentary evidence; for she still held the open letter aloft.

Of course, I wanted to ask her to let me see it, but there are some things one can't quite do. But I kept my eyes upon it until a faint illumination led me to ask, "What is the date of his letter?" whereupon she laid it open in my hand, shouting, as she did so, "Why, it's six days old, as you can see for yourself, and should have been here yesterday morning! That's why I'm not havin' the twenty-four hours' notice he promised me, no matter what happened."

Then, seeing that, after corroborating the date, I had properly turned from it, she urged:

"Read it. Read his letter through — *to please me!*"— and blushing as a young girl, she added: "And see what he calls me, and how he signs himself, if you want to get warmed up!"

So bidden, did I read his letter, from start to finish, and from the first, strong strokes to the last, I read as straightforward, coherent and tender a love-letter as even you ever wrote, Jack.

This satisfied me, so far as I could be satisfied. Surely her lover was sane, and it was fair to suppose he knew what he was doing. Still, I'm nothing if not conservative. The cards were still in my hand and I would not play one unadvisedly.

When first the full meaning of her visit dawned upon me, I wanted to embrace the great yellow creature, as far around as my little arms would go. Still, although my heart had suddenly become a harp and joy was playing a song of deliverance over its strings, my voice was quite like that of a lady casually addressing a visitor when I said, taking her arm and drawing her to a chair,

"Come, sit down, Dear, and let's talk it over.

Why do you think these are your flowers? And, if yours, why were they sent to me?"

"‘Why?’ Why gracious sakes alive, can’t you see? Ain’t my intended coming here to marry me *to-night*? And ain’t these brides’ flowers? — from A to izzard?"

"Sent to me, all the same, dear girl. Why to me? Your young man may be a Greek god, but it would take one with full divining power to know that he might safely bestow flowers, designed for a clandestine wedding, to the room of a lady he has never seen — whose name, even, he has never heard."

"Never heard your name? Don’t go so fast, dear lady! He knows all about you, bless your sweet heart. Do you suppose I’ve sent him a letter every day of my life since I’ve been in this pleggonned place, and not described the one bright thing in it? Why, do you know what I call you in my letters to him? My Little Oasis. It’s my name for you. I’ve written it so many times that I just write L. O. now, and he understands. So you can see what you’ve been to me, in this desert of Sahara! Why, I’ve never

caught your eye in my life, since we've first passed each other in the corridors, that you haven't smiled at me, like as if we might be friends — and it has given me courage.

"But I haven't told him you were" — she whispered the word, "*married*. I ain't that sort. No, but it's about all I haven't told him about you. He knows every dress you've got and your hats and parasols. Even the way you receive your mail, in a locked bag, sent special. I told him that just because it was so romantic, and there's so little romantic to tell here.

"So, you see, he's plannin' to arrive here this evenin' ——"

"Of course," I said at last, almost in tears over her loyalty, "of course, of course."

Really my whole soul was in a broad grin, and, strange to say, in all this emotional excitement, my heart seemed better, if anything.

I needn't say I was nice to the poor thing, now that I was quite sure, and I did all I could to make amends for my hesitation.

"Certainly, they're yours, my dear," I assured her, over and over. "It's as plain as day — and now, I don't mind confessing, it is a certain re-

lief to know it. And aren't they wonderful? Let's go and look them over!" And, taking her hand, I led her to the bath-tub. To tell the truth, it wasn't easy to handle the situation casually and I did almost blurt out "Thank God!" when we came to the bride in the cathedral, and I realised my severed connection with her.

While we stood together thus and she was hugging and kissing "the cunnin' little thing," a card was handed in "for Miss Butterfield," and seizing it and gasping "It's him!" she rushed away; but turning suddenly at the door she came back, lifted me in her great arms and danced with me all over the room, until finally, kissing me, on my hair, my cheek, my hand, she set me down on my feet and left me without a word, her face deluged with tears.

I couldn't have been more honoured if I'd founded an asylum or despatched a cargo of trained nurses to a battle-field. Some of us women are so overpaid for easy good-will, while others who agonise and strive go unrewarded to their graves. Oh, Jack!

But returning to the Butte and her romance, her young man is certainly doing handsomely

by her. We've been to lots of smart weddings, you and I, and I've never seen so much money expressed in wedding flowers, in my life, never.

And would you believe it? I'm as weak as a kitten, now the panic is over and my temples throb like sledge-hammers.

Oh, for the old joy that is dead! If only all this cloud were blown away, and you were here to take me in your arms as the happy Butte did, and dance with me — and even scold me for any old thing!

My heart was better as long as the cyclonic comedy of the flowers made me forget — but now, the old pain! — for the sun of my life is gone out, and, oh, oh, oh! — the sudden dart! The knife pain!

It was your intercepted letter — in my pocket. My hand ran against it, and it cut all the terrible truth into my consciousness afresh.

But I must be brave — till you come — or till the end. I am so ill again, Jack. It's as if I saw you pulling back while fate forces you to come to me. Maybe death will be kind, and come quickly.

I must try for some sleep. It's early yet, and

they'll not be getting these flowers out till after dark, anyway — and I am so sickened with the Bermudas. I'd go to the roof if I dared, but I can't show up there as a prospective bride.

I wish I dared try a disguise. I believe I will. I've got lots of things I haven't worn here — that grass-green, gold-spotted veil you bought for your already-too-loud-looking wife, poor artless Jack; and that pongee parasol that I put away the day I came just because I counted s'teen like it on the roof. And there's that awful linen duster.

I'm going to do it, and I'll pull on those long yellow near-chamois gloves your well-meaning sister Laura gave me as a parting thrust — a hundred pairs on the roof this minute — and I'll climb into a cot and stay there until I get tired of it, and maybe, by the grace of God, I may get a little sleep, although I feel as if I'd never close my eyes again.

“Yes, and I'll take my writing-pad with me, like the short-hairs, and if good honest sleep will have none of me, I'll write and write and write. Don't think I don't realise that all this glib writing I'm doing, here on the brink of tragedy, is

saving me from madness, Jack — or from myself.

What would I do if I couldn't write!

On the Roof at nearly sundown.

You see, I've done it, Jack, and not a soul suspects me. Indeed, when I started out in this bromidic get-up, I had almost to pinch myself to know myself. I slipped around and approached the roof from a new direction, to ward off possible suspicion; then I took the first unoccupied cocoon I came to, steadied my parasol in a crotch of the spring, and here I am, and with a vista of profound outward peace to rest in — if rest would only come!

When I first got into my cot, I deliberately invited sleep by closing my eyes and thinking of feathers and down and floating things — but every way I turned, I seemed to see your face and I would wonder what you were doing now. So often that question haunts me, these last days. "What is Jack doing now? — and now? — and now? —", till I'm almost beside myself. Only three days more until you'll be here — if you come — and yet I feel as if it were an eternity

— eternity which never means less than heaven or hell. Three days!

It's long enough to die and be buried, and I'm hoping this may be the way out of it all — for both our sakes. But till then, you're mine, Jack!

A half hour later, by my watch.

I was interrupted here, Jack, by hearing my own name, "Heminway," spoken in a whisper. So I put aside my pen and peeped under my parasol to discover my masseuse, standing in the tower door whispering to Beauregarde Davis. I'd forgotten all about my massage just about then due, and no doubt the masseuse had been to my room and finding me gone, was inquiring for me.

No, I didn't listen. I didn't have to. They were only a stone's throw away and a slight breeze in my favour.

"No," B. D. had "no idee" where Miss Heminway was. She hadn't been on the roof to-day. "Oh, sure!" he'd heard about the flowers and the wedding — "but what else would you expect, from the likes of her? D'y'ever see an old maid look like that?" He had heard she had gone

driving, oh, yes, and "Who's she goin' to marry?"

How did he know? "Some says it's the Canadian Colonel, an' more says a man from New York, though *some* says the little Typhoid that's lost all his hair, the way he studies her an' writes poetry — but I don't think."

He, himself, leaned to the New Yorker, because a man would have to have all kinds of money to waste a carload of roses on a private wedding — the greatest lot since the old Doctor's daughter's wedding, when they stripped the conservatories.

Then somebody got up and pulled out and I didn't hear for a while. And then — it was the masseuse: (massoose, they call it here) —

"No, I don't know whether the old Doctor knows about it or not." She hoped so, however, and that he was resigned — although they always worried him, these weddings. But of course, it wasn't his fault. The Sanitarium wasn't a jail. It all came of the patients having nothing else to do, so they'd take notions to marry each other.

"Yes," B. D. knew that was so. "And sometimes it's the first healthy resolution a patient'll show," he contributed.

"You see, it's so handy," the masseuse agreed, "but that ain't here nor there with Miss Hemingway, and if you want *my* opinion, she's out now to meet her fiansay at the station, an' to my best belief, it's nobody but Dr. Welborn who it seems was taken suddenly with a need o' sleep day before yesterday, and had to run down to Richmond to get it — to get a license, *I* say, you mark my word!" And she added, with a chuckle,

"Ain't it funny how our staff have to go away to get sleep when people come from all over to get it here?"

It *was* funny, B. D. agreed, "and I have heard tell of some of 'em losin' sleep whilst they was away — which ain't for me to say. Anyway, we're goin' to have a weddin', and, of course, Dr. Welborn is always under suspicion with every pretty girl, but I ain't a-carin' who gets 'er, so's we keep 'er in the family. She's one little lady that I believe is polite on her insides. An' I always liked that colour hair, ever

since I chose a wax doll for my little sister that's dead. I often look acrost the roof an' think of her."

"Yes, I like her, too," agreed the lady of unguents. "She's real nice, but I've come to the point that I don't fix my affections on any of 'em. You turn yourself inside out to please some fine lady that smiles on you, just because she's in the habit of smilin', an' when her back's turned, you ain't any more to her than any other bottle of cocoa-nut oil and elbow-grease. Still, I like Miss Heminway, as I say. You may know I like her when I was sorry not to have to give her her rub — but that was partly on account of all the talk — an' I thought I'd get on to the news an' see them flowers." And as she turned away, she added: "An' they ain't goin' to be allowed to wilt, neither, so we won't have long to wait." And she was gone.

There is something in a conversation like this, Jack, in circumstances like these, which brings it straight to the ears for which it is not intended. It isn't voice-carrying, either, but something far more subtle. This harmless little gossip had scarcely risen above a whisper through-

out, and yet — I wonder if one might even be waked from sleep by a whisper of his name?

But I'm glad I overheard it. This comedy presentment of my recent tragedy — and the flower scrape was a tragedy while it lasted — has done me good, besides passing the time, which is the principal thing, now.

But I'm a wreck and a ruin of nerves from it all — on top of the real tragedy which is rending my soul — and I want you, Jack, only you! Oh, Jack! There's crape on my heart's door for the faith that is dead. Oh, oh!

The roof is so still. Everybody seems to be sleeping. I suppose most of them lead the regular routine life — a stated lot of things done at stated intervals, filled in between with sleep and forgetfulness. Mine may be the only turbulent soul here.

To me, even the scratching of my fountain pen makes a palpable noise topping everything till it falls into tune with the sea — the sea suggesting eternity in its boundless reaches and breathing like time against the shore. Indeed, what is time but Eternity breathing? Breathing — and breathing — and breathing — and ———

Written in Diary;
NEW YORK, June 21st.

Dear Long-neglected Book-of-my-Heart:

So many things have happened since our last heart-to-heart together that I scarcely know where to begin, and yet I am conscious that I've neglected you utterly ever since just before Jack's arrival at Seafair; and yet, as I have made you my confidant, first and last, chiefly as an ally during Jack's absences or my temperamental deflections, this seems hardly exceptional.

Still, there is something in our recent intimacy which makes me long to confide to your sympathetic pages, as an offset to the gloom in which my last contributions were cast, the story of my happy issue out of all my troubles,— the troubles which cloud your pages and express only turbulence and anguish of soul.

I shall see to it that Jack never has another peep into your sacred bosom, but there may be those who will come after me — daughters, not sons, for this — to whom I shall be only too glad to commend your utmost confidences, even at the expense of my seeming dignity, hoping in this

trivial record of miserable tears and narrowly-averted disaster, possibly to guard them against similar pitfalls in life.

To go further than this now would be telling, and my poor little story needs for interest all that it may develop of surprises in its unfolding.

I do not recall our very last words together, but I keenly do remember that they brought to your defenceless pages tortures of maddening jealousy and despair over my having but just discovered Jack's correspondence with the little Carter; that it was while struggling with this and its resultant insomnia that there arrived anonymously to me a cargo of wedding flowers which filled my rooms with implications of compromising disaster and my nostrils with sickening odours, to escape which — daring not to brook the covert scrutiny of the ostensibly sleeping patients upon the roof who regarded me as an imminent bride, with free speculations as to the groom — I finally assumed a disguise, and slipping out among the quiescent cocooners, crept into a cot, lifted my parasol and invited sleep.

But, although weary to the breaking point in

mind and body, sleep warily eluded me hour after hour, until finally, from sheer exhaustion, I fell into that blissful semi-conscious state between sleeping and waking in which one dimly realises the small noises about one, but realises them as happily inadequate to disturb his sweet sense of tranquillity, this being, to my mind, the poetry of sleep which is at once both more and less than the standard article of faith which does not hesitate to drop one into oblivion as into a starless black forest, without landmark or compass — that deep gloom wood in which phosphorescent nightmares are known to wander, ready saddled for any dreaded haunt to mount in all his bones and glare at one as horse and rider rattle by, in a night too dark for shadows.

The veiled slumber which we intimately know as dozing and which approaches timidly with titillation of the eyelids and an ineffable sense of repose, may lead one along dry country roads into which fresh rain begins to fall or to budding fields of lilies which blossom and nod as he passes; or it may even mysteriously lift him from his feet so that he floats just above the lily heads with never a fear of the bees which come so near

or of disturbing the motherbird whose brooding wing he fairly skirts as he goes by her nest in the reeds.

It is a region of gentles, this dream-land of Arden, and lies too close to the guards of Wake-land for uncanny beasts to prowl and near enough the rim of the black forest for twilight and the sense of mystery and remoteness so grateful to the glare-tired and earth-weary.

As I dozed thus safely between the two borders in my cot that day, I remember realising that at intervals several of my neighbours rose and walked away, some even eschewing tiptoe, and yet not having power to fully rouse me from my deliciously-conscious semi-sleep.

(Seems to me that's pretty nice writing, dear Bookie. Wouldn't it be funny if all I've been through should develop a literary talent in little me? There's no telling! Stranger things have happened. I may be heard from yet.)

Even the whistled salutes of one or two passing boats near shore reached me only as joy-notes kindly muffled by the fog of sleep; and yet, strange to say, it was the merest swish of a page turning quite near me which suddenly opened my

eyes; and by lifting my face just a wee bit, I saw a man's hand hanging, palm downward, from the cot next my own.

This was interesting and I was instantly wide awake. It was a nice hand, clean, strong, kind-looking. It reminded me of Jack's hand, somehow, even to the tiny band of gold encircling its third finger. Jack wore just such a ring, my gift — but, of course, most rings are much alike on their under sides.

Jack's is an ancient intaglio which I picked up in Siena during our last engagement and had mounted for him in a design of my own drawing, "two perfectly bromidic griffins clasping the seal in a sulphitic way," so I playfully described it to him on presenting it.

Glad of something trivial to keep my mind off the danger shoals, I began rebuilding Jack's ring from memory when my neighbour turned another leaf, withdrawing his hand and dropping it again, this time turned over so that I clearly saw what seemed a replica of Jack's ring.

I knew it was silly and yet my heart stopped for a moment and I felt as if I were dying; then it played an anvil chorus in my ears and I felt

myself strangling with I knew not what, when the reader put down his book and took out his watch, and from my pillow, I distinctly saw *my own picture painted inside the case of Jack Hem-inway's watch.*

Next day:

I had to leave you yesterday, Bookie, to answer a telephone call, and couldn't get back to you. Viola Vixen Vandegrief called me up and wanted me to go out for a spin with her, and I couldn't refuse as she is Jack's sister-in-law's niece and she's in trouble, poor dear. I tell you, Bookie, this living on alimony must be trying to any woman of spirit. Poor little Vixie is a perfectly harmless creature, fairly running over with small grievances just now and she's one of those who, when once she gets her wind, you can't stop.

And she is having what she calls a "helova-time." So she condenses in her notes to me, as she knows her maid reads all she writes, when she gets a chance and all she receives always. But this is the only way I've ever known her to condense. I have an idea her prolixity had somewhat to do with Paul Vandergrief's deflection,

for the co-respondent in the case is a wax-doll who has never been known to say anything. But she'll probably get Vixie's house in Gramercy Park, all the same, from the way things look, and he is fairly niggardly with his wife in his allowance—and poor Vix can't make a fuss just because, you see, men have liked her and Paul could give her cold shivers in a court-room, if he were provoked to it. That was what she wanted to consult me about, and why we stayed out so interminably.

“How did I advise her?” Oh, of course, I advised her first and last to make up with Paul, no matter what. I assured her that positive proof of a husband's infidelity didn't amount to a row of pins; that husbands were the most maligned class on earth, especially when they were in the least attractive; that any woman who believed her own eyes against a man she loved was an idiot. Oh, I put it strong! That's the only way I'd ever advise any woman, after this, but——

But, I say, I was telling you — for my still remotely imminent daughters' perusal — I was

telling you, dear Book, about Jack and me, and our tumultuous finish at the Rest Cure.

Where were we? Oh, yes. I was on the Seafair roof in my cot and had just discovered my picture in Jack's watch, in the hand of the man-worm of the cocoon next mine.

"What did I do?" when I recognised Jack's watch in what seemed his dear hand? Not only that, but when he had seen the time, I saw him turn the watch to look at my picture and heard his familiar chuckle of domestic bliss.

"I chortle in my glee when I look at you, Blessibus!" So he had said more than once in moments of tenderness, and it seemed to me I almost heard him say it now.

"What did I do?" - Why, Bookie, I'm almost ashamed to tell you. I bawled, that's what I did. Just *bawled!* Aloud, as a child weeps when the end of all things has come, so I let myself go.

Of course, Jack was up instantly and beside me with a spring and before the curious knew what was doing, his head was under the pongee parasol and they must have heard him talking

baby-talk. It's a motherly way Jack always had with me if I'd get to crying, this baby-talk.

I have no idea what I said. Jack was there. His dear arms were around me. I must have said something, however, for presently he was answering:

"Because, my darling, they told me you were out driving, and I strolled up here to take a squint at your 'cocoonery,' and your Beauregarde Davis came and asked me if I'd like a cot, and I said to myself 'Why not? I'll take it and see how it feels — till she comes,'— and I must have slept quite a bit. After my night on the cars I was dead tired.

"Frankly, my dear, I had no idea you'd come in before dark and I didn't quite know where to bestow myself if I crawled out. You see, I couldn't register — not knowing just how things were — till I'd seen you.

"But what are you crying for? How could I register? Haven't I been telling you? Nobody knows I'm here. I couldn't give you away — and — and — sh — sh — h — h! People'll be wondering what's the matter. Aren't you glad to see me, Honeybus? 'Get your letter?' What

letter? I've got miles of 'em! Wait a minute! — and sh — h — h! Stop crying — I'll be right back ——"

A sudden attack of hysteria, while not exactly common among the nerve racked habitués of the roof, was not unprecedented and so no one paid much attention to a strange man hurrying away and returning presently with something in a tumbler to administer under a parasol.

New tired people came in, you know, as fast as the rested went out. The caravansary was used to itself and its ways.

Neither was any one interested to follow the hysterical lady entirely swathed in shawls and veil when she presently left the roof, virtually carried in the arms of her husband.

I had been so swept from my feet by the excitement of Jack's arrival that I hadn't thought of the comedy of the flowers — I hadn't thought of anything coherently indeed — until he had set me down in my room, in the midst of the array.

Then there was something in it all that seemed to bring back everything with a rush. I tried to straighten up and meet things, but I

was too tired, and after a spell of strangling and back-slapping I fell to sobbing and was forcibly taken to lap, willy nilly, and coddled and scolded.

I knew I was failing utterly as a woman and lapsing into a wretched invertebrate, but at last I got out:

"Oh, Jack! Jack!"—and then I was off again, fairly drowning in grief.

"It's these awf — awf-f-fl-flowers, Jack — and every thing! I'm going to d-die — I f-feel so ——"

Then, seizing the first trivial grievance that offered, I cried:

"Wh-why don't you ask me about them? Do you think I'm running a flower-show down here?"

"What's the matter with the flowers, I'd like to know? Have you any objection to them?" His voice was positively stern and it brought me to myself. I sat up and looked him straight in the eye.

"J-Jack Heminway," I stammered. "D-do you know anything — about — these — f-fool flowers?"

"Well, I like that!" He was exasperatingly calm. "Who else has a right to know, I wonder? Who else would be filling my wife's room with roses?"

I moved away back, to the very edge of his knees — and looked at him.

"But, Jack! Are you crazy? It's well I know who sent them or I'd think you had sustained an organic lesion of the brain! Why, those orchids must have cost three dollars apiece at Thorler's — if not more."

"They did cost fully that, my dear — if not more — and at Thorler's. There's nothing wrong with that, that I can see, and —" He had been unwinding the green gauze from my head, and now, seeing me well for the first time, he chuckled: "And I don't see anything wrong with you, either. Why, bless me, Blessy, you're as pink and smooth as a three months' old baby. This rest-cure is great! But come, now, I want to do some talking.

"First, I must hurry down and register — and it might be well for you to go with me; that is, if you are ready to 'fess up and acknowledge me?"

This was bringing things to a focus. Trouble already vaguely hovering loomed dark and awful.

I'm not a cry-baby, exactly. I know I'm not, and yet, all my life, when I haven't known what else to do, I've just cried. And so I did now — just cried, wearily at first, then — all the time with my face averted from Jack's — I let myself go again, in sheer bewilderment of grief, Jack pitifully begging me to tell him about it; and when I finally escaped from tears, it was by the unhinged gate of laughter — and, of course, that required heroic measures, drops chokingly swallowed and kisses limply repelled, before I was able to listen while poor Jack kept reminding me that the time was short and he had important things to say.

Even this sensational announcement fell upon my ears like summer rain with no meaning beyond the power to defer the evil moment, until, finally, he lifted my face to his, wiped its tears away and said, in the unmistakable tone one uses in trying to quiet a crying child:

"Guess what I've got in my dress-suit-case down stairs?"

But I was in no mood for guessing.

"I've brought your wedding-dress, Wifey, and it's down in the rotunda now."

Now, I listened. Anything to avert the main issue! Besides, this was interesting.

"And have you known him all this time?" I asked, sniffing. "And are you in it, too?"

"In what, Beloved?" Oh, how I loved him! And how I kept sheathing the blade which would any moment sever us forever! I even welcomed the Butte's silly affair as a foil in my extremity!

"Why, in the Butte's wedding, to-night, of course. She asked me to be matron of honour, and I had to tell her I had no suitable dress, and here you turn up with the dress and you evidently know all about the flowers and everything."

"Butte nothing! But you're to be matron of honour, just the samee!"

At this, the furniture in the room began to sway and the windows turned dizzily sidewise, while red and green discs melted into each other whichever way I looked. I grasped my husband's knee and half sanely and half as one on the ragged edge, I gasped:

"It's Alice in Wonderland! And you're going to say 'All persons over a mile high, leave the court!'"

"Well, suppose I do. That won't expel you!" But his light laughter belied a serious face, even while he added playfully, "You're not a mile high, even when you get on a high horse. I can always reach you with a step-ladder."

"You are making fun of me, Jack!" I snapped. "I may be a real fool — but I'm not — I'm not a fantastic fool! What's all this nonsense about my wedding-dress — and — and all these silly flowers — and your sneaking in and spying on me?"

"Blessy!"

"No, I take that back, of course!" It was really too common! "But it is queer, you'll allow. Here I've been led to believe you couldn't possibly be along before Saturday, and ——"

"*Blessy!*" The call was staccato. "Look in my face. Now listen, will you? Give me five minutes, and not a syllable, if you love me, till I get through. There's going to be a wedding here to-night, a sensational wedding in the smart

set, and you are to be matron of honour — do you hear?”

“Ambition, distraction, uglification and derision,” I mocked,—“and the drawing-master was a conger eel and he taught us drawing, stretching and fainting in coils. But where’s the gryphon?”

I repeated the words mechanically, gazing vacantly at the discs as they floated between my eyes and my little plaster Lincoln Imp upon the wall, but Jack paid no attention whatever. Alice in Wonderland did not exist for him while he went on:

“And I brought your wedding-dress, my dear, because I remembered that you wore it when you were matron for Evelyn Dardrieth.”

“But Evelyn Dardrieth was my friend.”

“And the bride of this evening is a friend’s friend.”

The phrasing of this shot a chill through me. His letter to “a friend’s friend” that moment in my pocket was suddenly a live coal firing my mind to flame. Was he insidiously, maliciously, brutally, tending toward some awful *dénoue-*

ment? In the lurid glare of suspicion, jealousy conjured all sorts of horrors.

For a moment my hand even sought the offending letter. If there was going to be trouble like this, the initiative was mine, not his, and yet, as I looked into his face, I couldn't do it. I couldn't accuse him; but I am sure my face was not good to behold as I sprang from his knee, but not swiftly enough to elude his staying hand. Gently but firmly he drew me back to my place, and held me there. It really was my place, for was I not his rightful queen and on my own throne? So, loving him with all my life even while I held aloof, I parried the inevitable, just to prolong this last moment there, and tried to answer him casually:

"Really, Jack," I pleaded, "are we talking on the earth plane, honestly? And who, may I ask, is this 'friend's friend,' forsooth — and where?"

"She is here. Now, keep still, Blessy. You look so strange, you scare me. I'll do my best to explain, but don't scream 'Fire!' or 'Police!' till I'm done. You've heard of Geraldine Haldane, Carrie Oglesby's chum, and at present Oglesby's ward? Well, I — J. D. Heminway —

as Oglesby's partner, am, in a manner, representing him. You understand? You remember the girl?"

"Remember the beautiful heiress, Geraldine Haldane? Why, who hasn't heard of her? Everybody in New York who is anybody knows all about her, of course — and that Englishman. Haven't they been floating in and out of society columns, both here and on the other side, for the last twelve months? She virtually lives abroad, anyway. You know, she's lost — disappeared months ago when the Duke of Don-aught came over to marry her. Lots of people think she's been swallowed up in the white slave trade. Of course, I wouldn't wish ill to anybody, but if my sorrow over so gruesome a fate could be mitigated, it would be in the case of one of these supercilious, expatriated American heiresses."

"That's the worst thing I ever heard you say, Blessy. But don't worry. She's a little white slave of circumstance, is Miss Haldane, but that's all, and she is going to be married here to-night — and to her other English lover — and that's why I hurried along."

"Why you hurried along? I'll be switched if I see the connection, but no matter. Will you kindly tell me why she is to be married here, of all places in the world?"

"Because they *are* here."

"‘They,’ you say? Here? Not at Seafair?"

"Yes, my Love, here at Seafair — at the sanitarium to which institution I've been dutifully directing all Oglesby's business correspondence with her, sending her cheques, etc., for the last six months, to ward off possible suspicion of his keeping up with her. They say her people have detectives shadowing everybody she knows. Oglesby really didn't know where she was, for a while. I'm quite curious to see her, especially after your report of her. Of course, you've guessed that she's the little Carter."

Oh, little Book, little Book! I'll never be able to tell you what happened then, for I don't in the least know. My first consciousness was of "coming to" in Jack's arms. He says I suddenly fainted dead away while he was casually talking, which is the simple truth, as he saw it — dear unsuspecting Jack! — and he declares

that it was but a natural reaction, after my surprise in his sudden coming.

He'll never know how abased I was, how I grovelled in my soul when I just let myself fall limply back into my old place — when I fairly wobbled my head to make sure it rested over the little hollow in his dear neck — when finally I was able to look up into his dear eyes and whisper, "Kiss me, Jack."

They say the hour of utmost peace in a woman's life is when her child is born. Maybe it is, but I'm not sure.

When I arrived at speech again, doing my best to be casual, I found myself at a loss as to just where Jack had left off. Fortunately, he promptly came to my relief with:

"Had you guessed before I came, my dear?"

"Guessed about the Carter? Surely not. How could I? But, Jack, you know she's as crazy as a loon!"

Jack threw back his head and roared.

"No doubt. And so were you crazy when you married me, but it wasn't in the game for you to show it. Her case is just the reverse, and I'm

told she does the nervous prostrate to a turn. Oglesby and I nearly expired over that 'hell-hounds' business. Yes, they say she's worked in all the frills and fooled the whole bunch here."

"But the man, Jack? The Englishman? You say 'they' are here. I'll remember his name presently. It's—it's—let me see. Street, that's it, Sir Reginald Street. He must just have arrived."

"Not at all. He's been here almost since she came—and he goes by his own name, too—his own name, translated, Reginald La Rue."

"Not my Canadian! The perfidious creature! Reading his old poems to me and—and——"

"And knowing all the time who you were and doing you numberless little kindnesses of which you were unaware. He knew we were trying to help him and he didn't know how much you knew, and he hoped every day that you would broach the subject next his heart. He is a manly fellow, much too good for the whole tribe of Haldanes, although I'm half converted to Miss Geraldine, myself—the way she just wouldn't when she wouldn't, and Sir Duke had

to turn around and go back. Only last week, her mother said to me: 'If I could only find her, she might marry whom she pleased.'

"'And would you be willing to put that in writing?' said I, seizing my chance. 'I'm going knocking 'round and I might stumble on her — and if I had ——'

"'Gladly!' She interrupted with a gush of tears, not even letting me finish.

"*And I have it in my pocket this minute — with the license, which, I assure you, gave us more trouble — but we've got it!*

"So you can see there was no time to lose. You know, her mother was a Vanderthrift and she had the millions and, as I've said, Oglesby is her guardian now. Her father had a stroke when she disappeared, but she mustn't know it."

A white light began to dawn. I looked around the room, at the flowers — and then at my husband.

"And these are her flowers, I suppose?"

"Yes, Goosey, these are her flowers. Have you any objection?"

"Don't bother me, Jack. Let me get my wits together. She never seemed to see the Cana-

dian. Why, I never knew her to leave her room."

"Strictly not. She's as much afraid of a camera as any criminal. Otherwise Street could not have dared show up here, for, of course, she didn't know he was here, that is, not till day before yesterday. He knew she was in retirement and he came incog., just to be near her. He sent all his letters under cover to Montreal or Quebec to be remailed, and there were not many — and, even so, they were written in French as from a certain Sister Mercedes, nonexistent, who is alleged to have taught her in some convent on the other side — just in case the secret should have leaked out. They've had a bad time, those lovers.

"But when I started off with that maternal permission in my pocket, Oglesby sent a telegram in cipher to 'La Rue,' who rushed a card up to 'Miss Carter,' and things began to march in line.

"Of course, she would have married without her mother's consent, if worse came to worst, but she hated to, after openly defying her about Donaught, or Donaughty, as the New York

Galaxy calls him. I fancy, from all accounts, that the little girl did well to let him slide. Oglesby has handled the affair on his side with great delicacy and skill. Five millions there, you know. But for my having been drawn into it for him, I might never have heard of this place or thought of sending you here.

"If Street hadn't been a trump, I'd have put you on your guard, but it wasn't necessary. But tell me, Dear, what put such a notion into your head as that these were the Butte's flowers?"

"Not now, Jack. One thing at a time. I'll tell you all about that to-morrow, next day, next week —"

"And you say *to-night*, Jack?"

Jack took out his watch.

"In exactly three hours. The decorators come at eight to arrange the flowers in the chapel, ceremony at nine. Train for Chicago at ten fifteen — thence they go to — well, that's their business."

I had been rubbing Jack's hand up and down over my cheek. I put it down now and laid my other hand over it in my lap while I answered:

"I begin to see—and things look natural again, or half natural. But, Jack, why in the kingdom did you send those flowers *to me*? I won't try to tell you the fright they put me to—not now."

"For every reason, Dear, I sent them to you. First, because I knew my little wife to be discreet. She isn't caught napping. If she didn't understand, she wouldn't say so. Am I not right in that?"—kissing the top of my head, as he spoke.

"But I was much too humble yet to do more than shrug my shoulders.

"Then, Dear," Jack went on, "you see, no one knew anything about the wedding, and they were not to know until the last minute—not until they had been invited into the chapel—*savez?*"

"Yes, I see."

"And didn't I guard your little secret well, 'Miss Heminway'?—you little rascal!—when I sent them just to 'No. 99, Heminway,' no Miss or Mrs. or anything—no seeming avoidance—no possibility of mistake."

"Hush bragging, Jack, and hand me my buffer. I've had every physical attention here

except manicuring. Women don't manicure for other women much, and I always go gloved to the roof — and my sainted old Doctor is in the far-sighted period of life, poor dear. That's why he still thinks well of me.

"Look at my hands. Well washed and then forgot. You are much too good for me, Jack, but there's no time to talk now. You'd better ring for those suit-cases and while you're shaking out wrinkles, I'll be polishing up.

"Any refreshments?"

"Oh, yes, a few things. Some terrapin and lobster and a *galantine* or two and sandwiches — and, of course, a little champagne and coffee — and the usual bride's cake, etc."

"And only us, for all that?"

"Yes, only us and a handful of friends from the Belvedere, and Joe Conwright and his wife are motoring over. And, by the way, the Governor of the State is here for the night, with his lady. It seems they have a niece here, taking the cure. I met them on the sleeper and we exchanged cards and they are coming, and I'll get him to sign as one of the witnesses. It'll tickle the old lady Haldane tremendously."

"And no one from the sanitarium?"

"Several from the sanitarium, certainly, besides Dr. Jacques and his family, who will be the most dignified witnesses. I believe she's asking several of the staff, each one confidentially, of course. And your friend, the joke-man, he's in the secret. Indeed, he's going to write it up for the New York press."

"And how long has he known, pray?"

"Since just now — several hours ago. Oglesby telegraphed him to meet a member of his firm at the station to confer about a matter of business — and there he stood when I got off the train. And he's to have a ripping cheque, too, worthy of the prominence of the contracting parties. Poor little man! When I told him what he would be paid, he quite filled up for a minute as he gasped: 'Gee! What a windfall! Why, I'll be able to send for my wife. She's awfully done for, after nursing me through all my typhoid.'"

"His wife?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, no reason, I suppose — only, he looks such a boy — and it was so silly of him to spend

all that money on roses, if he had a wife to look after and is so poor that a little wedding write-up counts."

"You have much to learn, little one. Don't you know that people of the artistic temperament dote on buying roses when the bread's out? And they are high class when they don't owe for their roses, the dear infants. But as for this being a trifling order, you are mistaken. One of the last things her mother said to me was ——"

"Whose mother?"

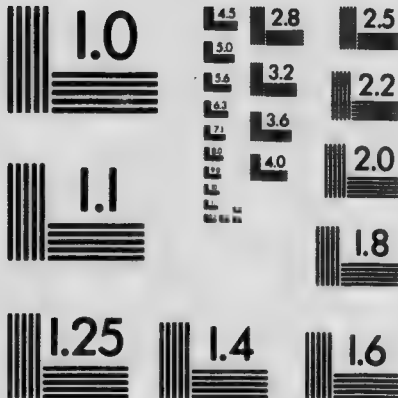
"Why Geraldine Haldane's mother, of course. Whose else? The last thing she said to me when she signed that paper was, 'Nothing cheap, now! If you *should* run against them and they *should* be playing fool and getting married, I want decent bills. No tupenny business. Oh, my poor lamb!' And she was weeping copiously when she said it, too, poor old soul!"

"So I went straight from her to the telephone, consulted Oglesby, thence to the florist, ascertained what the Campden-Bellows wedding flowers cost and duplicated the order to a dot. From there to Sperry's and had the Ulric-Considene wedding-supper repeated, with a trifle or two



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added just for grandeur, and I was on my way to fetch a reporter when I remembered your little joke-man whom I discover to be one of the *Planet's* crack society reporters, supposedly still *hors de combat* after a tussle with typhoid, and he's to have his cheque to-night — and I believe that's all. My handling of the affair shall be as princely as I can make it. I don't often have such a chance."

"And you've never told her mother a thing?"

"The secret wasn't mine to tell, dear heart. It became mine only to keep and I was let in simply to help. Besides, I wouldn't have trusted her. She'd no sooner have known her 'poor lamb' alive and well than she'd have tried to lock her up again.

"I don't see what she's making such a kick about, anyhow, for Street is big-rich in his own right and a gentleman. If it hadn't been for the possibility of the ducal coronet, she'd have jumped at Street. She'll always feel that Geraldine's cousin, Sybil Clangour, is just one degree ahead of Geraldine socially in being even the divorced wife of that nasty old Earl whom she was obliged to leave. You know, she and

Geraldine were presented the same season."

"Yes, I remember well enough. Two years after I was," I blurted, but Jack went on:

"I tell you, Blessy, the human is an inscrutable creature, especially the female of the species, in the exercise of her master passion."

"I agree with you, Jack," I chirped, squinting at the shine on my thumb-nail, to keep a straight face. "Yes, I agree with you, the female of our species is often more *lively* than the male. I admit that."

Jack was putting in his shirt studs and he didn't look up. He was used to my talk. Still, his face lit as he turned to me presently with:

"I've missed you a lot, Blessibus! I do wonder if I dare take you home with me, sure enough — about next Thursday, say? I think I might arrange to stay that long, and you will have had one solid week of real repose, dead calm. I'll see to that."

"Dare to take me!" I mocked. "Well, I like that! I dare you not to. But really, Jack, hadn't we better run down now, so that you can register? You see, you are just a strange man to these people yet, and you've been up here in

my room a good while. No doubt many of the three hundred curious who know you to be here surmise that you are the prospective happy groom — still, we don't want any talk."

" 'Happy groom?' " Jack repeated absently. Then, "Oh, yes, that's a fact. And by the way, Blessy, do you know I was wakened on the roof this afternoon by hearing my own name called — and I got on to local gossip in regard to my wife quite some."

"Did you hear that?" I giggled.

"Sure I heard it. Did you?"

"Oh, Jack, it's a funny world, this. I seem to see Alice looming again. Everything seems half unreal yet. But we've no time to talk now. Come along!"

As we crossed the roof together on our way to the elevator, hatless and happy as two children, I grabbed Jack's sleeve, detaining him just a moment to whisper in his ear:

"There they are, now, Dear, over by the south tower — that huge, ringlety man bending over the pink clouds in the roller-chair — that's the Brigand, hovering still, I see, around the Gipsy. Wouldn't it be terrible if he confused yellow

hair with haloes? — and she fairly dripping with any millionaire's diamonds! I wouldn't worry about him so if he weren't so alluringly rich — they say he's called four kinds of a king in the west, cattle-king and three others, and he's so artless. How lost she would be, poor frail sister, if he insisted on building a cathedral around her!"

I saw Jack glance searchingly at me as if wondering whether, by any chance, my mind had gone off, just the least bit. Still, his voice was quite natural when he whispered:

"Don't you fret about these people, my dear. That man will never offer that woman a cathedral. Yachts and aeroplanes, maybe, and crystal palaces — but I respect his discernment in discovering my little girl for what she really is, in spite of her somewhat misleading halo. But ye gods! Who comes here?"

And before I could answer, the Butte, all done over in pink from aigrette to slippers, and a mile high, at that, emerging apparently from nowhere, had rushed forward and taken me in her arms.

"Don't mind me," she deferred to Jack.

"I'm just obliged to hug her!" And, drawing me forcibly aside, she confided:

"I've just been layin' in wait for you in the quilt booth yonder, watchin' for you to come along. I heard you had company. But, say! Mine swears he *never sent me those yellow roses!* I just had to come and tell you. But I know who sent 'em. God A'mighty sent 'em, that's who! Sent 'em out of a clear sky because He knew how forlorn I felt, and He knew that my beloved was on the way to me and that all his thoughts were of yellow roses which he couldn't find — and He took pity on me. Tell me, Dear, don't you think God could have sent 'em? Don't you believe He did?"

She was looking straight into my soul — my human, sympathetic, understanding sister-woman's soul — and swallowing hard while I said it, meeting her eager gaze steadily, I answered her.

"Surely, I do. What do we know about divine agencies? Certainly it was He who sent you your golden roses. Even if He had had to make them on the spot, that wouldn't be any trick at all for the One who could think all the world's roses, and endow them as He has done.

Besides, dear, everything queer is happening. Nothing could surprise ——"

But she interrupted:

"An' he's got the license an' everything — but, say! he denies all that outfit of weddin' ... vers, too — denies it pot black!" Then, lowering her voice and glancing at Jack, who had slipped back a bit into the shadow, she flashed: "*Oh, say!* Yours is as good lookin' again as his picture, although I'd know him by it. Of course, I knew he'd be classy. I heard a swell New Yorker was up in your room, your 'intended,' they said, but of course I had my own ideas.

"But tell me, you sweet thing. I look straight into my eyes. You couldn't tell a lie, if you tried. *Is* mine foolin' me? And *didn't* those flowers come anonymous? An' don't you an' I know in our souls they are my bridal flowers?"

"No, positively, dear. They are for another wedding — and, of course, my husband and I are in the secret. I didn't know till he came. They aren't yours, but ——"

I was thinking fast. What I wanted to do was to offer her the service of the flowers if she would take a later hour than the others for her

wedding. But when it came to doing this very definite thing, I found myself still strangely timid. I couldn't quite vouch for her sanity. Indications to the contrary were too recent. Laying my hand upon her, as in some sort apologising for my words which I toned as gently as I could, I plunged:

"And you say your man has *really* come?"

"'Really come?'" she repeated, stung to the quick, I feared. "Well, I like that!" And turning quickly, she called over her shoulder:

"You, Willie! Willie Winchester! Come out here and show yourself!"

And out from his hiding, behind a stack of screens, stepped forward, or rather ambled, a great, kindly, loose-jointed man, so like the Brigand that I started, almost hesitating before I offered him my hand, as I made a point of doing.

But when he had come out into the full light, and the slanting rays of a low sun fell into his hair, illumining his face, I saw a man still like our Brigand, but glorified, younger, gentler, and of fairer colouring, and I realised how the camera, which takes no note of half shades, had

seemed to present a replica of the older man, for even in height and general outline the two were singularly alike.

"Mr. Winchester, I want to make you acquainted with Mis' Heminway, the lady I've been writin' you about ali this time. In other words, this is my Little Oasis; my intended, Mis' Heminway."

So we were introduced. And then, of course, I had to call Jack, and he and the "intended" got into a little talk while the Butte, chuckling absurdly, drew me apart again to whisper:

"Say, ain't he the spittin' image of Col. Copperthwaite? I saw you see it quick as you laid eyes on him. They tell me that when I used to be nervous and half nutty, whilst I was losin' my sleep so constant, I fairly hounded the colonel. You see, I took him for my Willie. Wasn't it fierce?"

Before we parted, it was agreed that by assumed concurrence of the first parties in the first ceremony the second wedding that evening should occur at ten o'clock, the floral decorations to remain intact; also that, in the absence of any of her near of kin, I should stand with the second

bride, also, as matron of honour. Then with a final precautionary "Mum's the word," fairly wresting myself from the mammoth blush which suffused me in "just one parting hug," I seized Jack's arm and we hurried down together — to register and to "make good."

During all this rapid fire, there smouldered as a red coal in my sub-consciousness a sense of shame and responsibility as to the letter which lay deep in my pocket; and so the first thing I did when we had reached the rotunda, while Jack was writing his name in the great book, was to hand the letter, with a sinful tip, to the porter with a request that he deliver it without delay to the lady to whom it was addressed, as it had been sent by mistake in Mrs. Heminway's mail; on doing which, thus openly, I felt something like a sense of dignity restored.

And this, Dear Book, is the story as nearly as I can tell it straight, of how there came to be two weddings in the chapel at Seafair that evening — two notable weddings, indeed, for the real identity of the Butte and still more of her man, and their romance, of which it would be only tantalising to offer a hint and which it would

take much too long to tell — all that is another story.

There was a menacing hitch in the affair for a little while when it was learned that the train from Richmond which was to fetch the officiating ministers had been detained by a "freight block ahead" and could not possibly arrive before midnight; but while everybody concerned was consulting and no one able to suggest relief, into the breach stepped who but the Brigand, if you please, eager, complaisant, offering his services.

He had been regularly licensed as the Campbellite "Christian" minister, many years before, it was true, but he had always kept himself equipped for emergencies (plural, please notice) and could marry, baptise, or bury on occasion. Indeed, before any one could question him, he had whipped out his license and robes, the use of the latter, he explained, being a matter of choice.

For himself, although exercising his prerogative only by authority conferred by a church connection which discountenanced ceremonial or display, he felt a certain dignity in donning the surplice and stole for the marriage rite.

Also, the Episcopal form was at their service, if preferred; and further, he hesitated to suggest — and yet why should one hesitate to do a kindly turn? — it was no business of his, although, of course, it would be a matter of business if Mme. Gipsy Fournette could be induced to sing — if it was desired, he was not sure, but perhaps —? She was very expensive, of course, but if people knew what was what and were willing to pay for the best — Madame had just been discharged by her physician and would be returning to her work in a day or so. It was the chance of a lifetime.

Certainly he would see about it, although he always advised the principals to approach a professional on a matter of business. She was an artist and could be *très difficile* if she were provoked.

Well, the upshot of it all was that when I walked up the chapel aisle, that evening, preceding the first bride, correctly, my first surprise came in the Wedding March from Lohengrin, a contribution of local talent and admirably done by whom but the poor Visiting Lady whom I did not recognise, of course, until later in the even-

ing, when it was my delight to take her hand, and virtually, if not literally, tell her that I loved her. And I did, as I implied it, with all my heart; and I was so glad to discover that she had the consolations of music when her thankless task of feeding sugar to jungle beasts in a menagerie became too hard.

At the moment we reached the chapel and the waiting groom, even while the last notes of the organ were dying there arose a rich contralto voice, tender and sweet in Cantor's beautiful "Oh, Fair, Oh, Sweet and Holy," filling the chapel with melody so tender, so really "sweet and holy" in tone suggestion as to become a fitting part of worship, such was the art of Gipsy Fournette, such nature's endowment to her.

And while she approached the closing notes of her song, silently, noiselessly, from behind the palms to the left of the high altar, there stepped the most resplendent creature of us all, for I assure you, dear, dear Book, our Brigand had neglected nothing in the way of magnificence.

My recollection of him now is as of a great blur of crimson and gold, and when I appealed

to Jack — afterward, of course,— he could give me little satisfaction as to its significance.

He insisted, however, in taking upon himself any possible blame in the matter, as he confessed, when I had delivered myself of my opinion on the subject — which was that our officiating minister, in the performance of a sacred Christian ceremony, had got himself up like a pagan, and that to my mind, his appearance suggested a cross between a Chinese mandarin and a cockatoo — when I had got this venom out of my system, I say, Jack insisted that any blame as to the Brigand's effort in our behalf should be laid at his door, as when that artless though dangerously resourceful person had consulted him in the matter, he was busy with other things and had playfully thrown at him that this was to be a full-dress occasion and to "*go ahead and do his damnedest!*"

Which it seems, he did. But to do him justice, when approached playfully at the supper-table on the subject of "presenting a pagan priest to a Christian congregation," he was eager to explain with pains and particularity that he had carefully selected from such oriental garments

as he had in his trunk only such as symbolised spiritualism without dogma and which consequently belonged by right to west as well as east. Christianity had a right to all the lofty symbolism there was, or "the best that was going," to quote literally. He wished he could explain, but it was difficult to interpret the Orient in the clumsy phrasing of occidental tongues.

We were glad to know all this, for every reason, and indeed, in any event, it would have been particularly hard to find serious fault with a man who, after putting himself to so great pains, had resented even a mention of compensation for his services. Besides neither of the parties most concerned had seemed to find anything to criticise, which was a comfort.

Of course, Jack made the honorarium to Mlle. Fournette with a view to pleasing old Mother Haldane. Money was positively no object, and when a man with no cost to himself can honestly encourage the arts, entertain a lot of pleasure-hungry shut-ins, and make two women supremely happy — why not?

And it is fair to suppose that the groom from

Montana duplicated her honorarium, for at the precise place in the second ceremony where she had sung in the first, the Gipsy gave us in fine form, Rubinstein's delightful interpretation of Heine's "Thou Art Like a Lovely Flower"—gave it thus in English translation, too, which I regretted, although I was probably the only person present who was vulgar enough to apply the words personally to the beaming bride and to run a troublesome mind swiftly through an interminable list of familiar flowers, and without result.

Let it not be supposed, however, that the happy bride from Montana, while perhaps failing to measure up as a flower, fell short in any particular as to full bridal dress, correct and elegant, although the ultra critical might have questioned its fitness for so necessarily unconventional an occasion; but this would have been because they were sentiment-blind and unworthy witnesses of a ceremony of high romance.

Even before the quiet departure of the first bridal party, a brilliant line of automobiles had begun to assemble at the entrance of the Sanitarium and guests from afar streamed into the

chapel, even while the posted notices of "general invitation" were crowding it beyond its doors, so that rosetted ushers in evening dress, Drs. Welborn and others of the younger members of the staff, were kept busy clearing the way for the second function, when the majestic bride strode measuredly in her place in full regalia, veil, orange-flowers and train, yes, and even a train-bearer, a fairy of five, whom I succeeded in capturing for the occasion from the wife of one of the resident doctors.

The Butte wished it thus, not that she or her Willie cared a rap, she assured me, but she "had had that weddin' outfit so long, and a girl could wear orange-blossoms only once. Then, too, it would be somethin' worth tellin' about and maybe showin', in after years: 'mother in her bridal dress,' and even grandmother, in time — one never could tell. Of course, she would have the picture taken the first thing, in New York."

This last wish, however, I easily saw to it that she should realise without delay, for it needed only a hint to the good lady of the Boston bag to have her whip out a camera and "a package of flash-light," and, at the psychological moment,

the thing was done in a wink — done from the choir-gallery of the chapel, just as the bride turned smiling from the altar beside her man.

And so it happened that the crowning spectacular event of the evening was the sensational marriage and departure of the young lady of Butte, and when the honking cortege finally disappeared, a blaze of glory along the beachroad, and the nine-days'-wonder of it all had been whispered out in the corridors and on the roof, the sanitarium settled down into a dead calm.

Poor Butte! She had had a romantic if sad and spectacular life up to this. If only I could tell you her story! And his — her Willie's! — what difficulties they had surmounted, and what they are even now setting out to accomplish, God help them!

He — Mr. Winchester, to be decent — was delighted with everything and insisted on throwing money out promiscuously, but, of course, again, Jack could not fail the Lady Haldane.

He did relent, however, to the extent of taking Winchester into his confidence as to the official reporter, fee and all, with the result that the press of east and west, from Maine to California,

was supplied with distinguished notices written, on a duplicate order, by the radiant Joke-man, whose name for the nonce it seems high time to be writing with a capital, and who resembled nothing so much as a migratory grin, as he circulated officially at both functions.

At double weddings, I believe, both ceremonies are incorporated in a single service; thus, the affair at Seafair was not strictly of this class, and yet when my friends of that kindly institution insisted on calling this a triple wedding, inasmuch as the matron-of-honour in her yellowing wedding-gown had not to them been married until the great occasion, I accepted the rôle of stale bride with blushing apology, while old Dr. Jacques, who is a saint if there ever was one, took my side like a man while he explained how it hadn't been my fault in the least, but had all come about through a slight inadvertence on the part of their office clerk, who had misunderstood on my arrival.

And then having the floor, he went on to assure us that Miss Batterfield's marriage had been pending ever since her admittance and had only awaited his professional permission, which

had gone into the mail to her people only the day before the unexpected appearance of the groom, so that, all other things arranged, he had no right to interpose objection; after which, with a twinkle in his kindly old eye such as I had never seen there before, he laughingly added that while no doubt he seemed to us an unsuspecting, easily gulled old codger, he was in fact the custodian of so many vital secrets that he sometimes felt like a walking arsenal, and was half afraid to go near the fire lest he should blow up, and then, where would we all be?

Well, so ended my brief, if strenuous pursuit of the Rest Cure, for in the dead calm of my week of probation, I was ready meekly, contritely and obediently to fold my hands and take all my orders from Jack, who got them from Dr. Jacques, of course, with the result that, on my return home, I looked so renewed and was so conspicuously able without fatigue to resume the comparative tranquillity of social life as it is lived in semi-gay New York that several of Jack's friends have already sent their nerve-racked wives to this Haven of Repose with the

cogent argument that "it stands to reason that when a woman is worn out with a thousand things, there's nothing like a negative existence — still, colourless days with tranquillising surroundings — to bring her through; nothing, in fact, like a cocoon for the recovery of wings."

And when they talk that way, Jack and I are still obliged to avoid each other's eyes. After a first little fling with our friends, we have settled down, and we are really living more quietly, more sanely than in the old days, taking stated times off from social things and getting into the open as much as possible, with sky-spaces for tranquil thinking and stillness in which to possess our souls.

The summer cottage in its garden by the sea is ready for us, its vine-clad veranda fairly blooming itself away in anticipation of our coming, but we delay going this season because we are secretly on a still hunt in town for something very near our hearts; and so, in the cosy evenings now, while Jack knits his brow over some perplexing point in the brief he is trying to write, on his side of the library table, and the canaries drowse in their little cage, one on the

nest and the man-bird chirping an occasional sleepy assurance of guardianship beside her, Jack glances over his glasses and smiles at them and then he turns to me. So he did last night, and seeing me bending to my task of braiding pink ribbons over and under the rim of a great basket beside me, he bit his lip and flung at me:

"What's all that about, Blessibus? It looks awfully fetching."

And I answered merrily:

"You're cheating, Jack. You promised not to look till it's done. But it's the bassinet, if you must know. Pink is for girls, Jack."

And we are very happy, even when it is dark night and raining outside, for we know that beyond the rain and above the clouds,

"God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world."

THE END

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